

Socialist Worker

For a socialist alternative to New Labour

80p

Former army tank commander speaks out against war

page 10

BNP wins Halifax seat
How we can beat the Nazis

page 7

Eyewitness report from World Social Forum in Brazil

page 13

Interview with Asian Dub Foundation

page 11

Don't let New Labour bully the FBU

THE GOVERNMENT is trying to break the firefighters. Everyone needs to fight to make sure its assault fails.

The threats and intimidation came as firefighters struck for 48 hours this week and planned another strike starting from 9am on Saturday.

A wave of anger swept through fire stations on Tuesday as deputy prime minister John Prescott said he would take legal powers to impose a pay deal on the firefighters.

Andy Brickles, the FBU union's East Midlands regional chair, told *Socialist Worker*, "This is a crucially important struggle for us and for every trade unionist in Britain. The employers are now saying they will not negotiate while we schedule strikes."

"They are obviously supported and directed by



Picture: JESS HURD

PRESCOTT wants the FBU humiliated

the government—as they have been from the start.

"The government can find limitless money to bomb Iraq but we are told that any pay deal over 4 percent will have to be funded by job losses and a worse service."

"It is scandalous that they are behaving like this. We need the full support of the TUC and other unions."

As well as halting talks, the government has now said the pay offer will get worse every time the firefighters go on strike. Such Thatcherite bullying cannot be allowed to succeed.

It was right for the firefighters to strike this week and it will be right to continue and to step up their action.

We urge all our readers to back the firefighters.

Other union leaders must be pressured to give full support to the FBU.

■ **The stakes are higher than ever—see page 15.**

Inspectors found nothing. Yet Bush and Blair still want blood for oil

RISE UP TO STOP THE WAR



March in London, 15 February, assemble 12 noon, Embankment and Gower St

WAR REPORTS...WAR REPORTS...WAR REPORTS...WAR REPORTS...WAR REPO

From boom to bust

FEAR OF war is causing panic in the world's stock-markets. Traders are terrified of the prospect of war on Iraq, and of a slowdown in the world's major economies.

Already tens of thousands of jobs across Britain could be axed, according to the CBI bosses' organisation.

About 45,000 jobs were cut in the last three months of 2002.

The CBI says a further 42,000 face the dole in the next few weeks.

One in five families are already struggling to repay their debts, according to the consultants B&W Deloitte.

That means pain and hardship for 6.1 million families. Around 2.3 million are paying around 31 per cent of their income just on repayments.

Aside from mortgages some 20 percent of people are struggling with credit card debt. The two biggest debts are personal loans and student loans.

Butchering children

THE ISRAELI army murdered 12 people last Sunday to guarantee war criminal Ariel Sharon's re-election as Israeli prime minister.

Israeli tanks and helicopters swept into Gaza City as Israel geared up for a general election on Tuesday of this week.

An Israeli soldier shot dead Ali Talab Aziz, a seven year old Palestinian boy, in Rafah in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli forces killed 24 Palestinians in 48 hours at the beginning of the week.

The Israeli government ordered the closure of all Palestinian cities, imprisoning 3.6 million people.

Israeli defence minister Shaul Mofaz said that Israel is considering a complete re-occupation of Gaza.

Right to protest

VICTORY WAS sweet for anti-war protester Leo Zeilig this week after all charges against him were dropped.

"We fought and won!" Leo told *Socialist Worker*. "That they didn't have the confidence to pursue charges against me is proof of the great strength of the anti-war movement."

Leo was arrested in London during the 31 October anti-war day last year.

He took part in the peaceful events in Whitehall that formed part of the Stop the War Coalition activities.

He was tracked by police throughout the demonstration and then arrested in Trafalgar Square.

Leo denied the charges of incitement to violent disorder. Now the Crown Prosecution Service has agreed that all charges against him should be dropped.

This is a success for the anti-war movement that has fought against police attempts to criminalise protest.

Leo says, "We must make sure that our campaign, the Right to Protest, organised by the Stop the War Coalition, continues to provide support and solidarity to others still facing charges."

£3,500,000,000

is the minimum that the war is going to cost people in Britain

And this is what it could have been spent on...



1248

new primary schools

or



28

fully equipped new hospitals

or



10

percent rise for every pensioner

There's billions for war but nothing for the poor

A WAR on Iraq will not just cost the lives of many tens of thousands of Iraqi people.

It will also cost billions of pounds, money lavished on US and British weapons of mass destruction, while public services are crying out for investment.

A war on Iraq will cost at least £3.5 billion in Britain. The graphic above shows how many schools and hospitals could be created with that money.

New Labour demands that families beggar themselves to send their children to university.

Yet the government signed a £300 million deal for a portable anti-tank weapon last week.

The Ministry of Defence contract went to a joint venture between the world's biggest arms firms, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, and the US government.

In the US the cost of a war on Iraq will be even higher.

In December *Business Week* reported "former White House economic tsar" Lawrence Lindsey saying the war could cost a staggering \$100 billion to \$200 billion.

Research by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences has put the cost in the range of \$99 billion to \$1.9 trillion.

In the US under George Bush the number of Americans living below the poverty line last year increased by more than a million for the

first time in eight years.

The multibillion dollar price tag is far higher than the cost of the last Gulf War in 1991. Then the US bullied its allies into helping pick up the tab—today it has few allies willing to pay.

Chas Freeman is a former

US ambassador who helped raise \$16.8 billion from the Saudis for the last war.

He said it would impossible to get them to pay a substantial portion of the costs this time because the Saudi public is "now 100 percent against an attack on Iraq".

Anti-war evening

ANTI-WAR events are planned for the day before the giant anti-war demonstration in London on 15 February.

They include:
●Poets against the war including Mike Rosen, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Tony Harrison, Benjamin Zephania and Adrian Mitchell, 6pm, Bloomsbury Theatre, Gordon Street.
●Trade union rally including Bob Crow (RMT), Jack Hyman (US West Coast longshoreman) and Andrew Murray (Aslef), 6.30pm, Bloomsbury Baptist Church, Shaftesbury Avenue.
●Globalise Resistance video link-up with Edward Said and Globalise This! speakers, 6.30pm, Hong Kong Lecture Theatre, Clement Building, London

School of Economics.

●Stop the War Coalition presents the film *Revenge's Tragedy*, starring Derek Jacobi, Christopher Ecclestone and Eddie Izzard, introduced by director Alex Cox, 6.45pm, Curzon cinema, Shaftesbury Avenue.
●Stop the War Coalition rally with Tony Benn, Algerian resistance leader Ahmed Ben Bella and journalist Yvonne Ridley, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road.
●Showing of the film *9/11* with one of the directors, Ken Loach, 8.30pm, Bloomsbury Theatre, Gordon Street.
●Cafe Bookmarks is open for books, refreshments and an exhibition by anti-war artists, 10am-10pm, 1 Bloomsbury Street.

Awesome power to slaughter

SOME 800 cruise missiles costing £1 million each are likely to rain down on Iraq in the first 48 hours of an attack codenamed Shock and Awe by the Pentagon. "There will not be a safe place in Baghdad," said one Pentagon official.

Bush cronies are after the Iraqi oil

THE WAR on Iraq is about oil—everyone knows it and now the US has admitted it.

Top of the US agenda is safeguarding Iraq's oilfields. They will send in US and British marines to seize control of the oilfields around Basra in southern Iraq.

The US State Department and vice-president Dick Cheney have hosted two sets of top level meetings with representatives of ExxonMobile, Chevron-Texaco, ConocoPhillips and Halliburton—the company

Cheney ran before he stood for election.

A senior state official said that the US had "crafted strategies that will allow us to secure and protect those fields as rapidly as possible".

According to a report by Deutsche Bank experts, "ExxonMobil's status as the largest US oil company gives it major weight with the US government."

"The company may find itself in pole position in a regime-changed Iraq."

Drivers put brake on arms trains

TRAIN DRIVERS in Motherwell, near Glasgow, blocked another ammunition train last week.

It is the latest phase in their refusal to move weapons for use in the war against Iraq.

In an effort to halt the drivers' resistance, freight company EWS brought in workers from Fort William depot to run the line. But these drivers refused to do the work once they knew the situation.

The Motherwell drivers are an inspiration to everyone, and their spirit should be an example to all.

Local Aslef union officials are now seeking to win agreement from EWS that there should be a "conscience clause" so that any driver who objects does not have to do war work.

□NATIONAL leaders of Aslef have voted to give £500 towards the cost of a train to the 15 February demo.

Call from a union

DAVE PRENTIS, leader of Unison, has sent this message to all members: "Unison, in opposition to the mounting aggression, is calling on all members and branches to make every effort to attend the national demonstration against the war on Iraq on Saturday 15 February."

On a red alert

SOME 30 hospitals across Britain have been put on standby for thousands of war casualties from Iraq.

The NHS plan is based on Britain having up to 2,000 casualties—one in ten of the soldiers sent.

A special unit at Birmingham's Selly Oak Hospital is set to receive the first injured casualties flown back to Britain. Other hospitals will then come on stream as the casualties mount.

Yet critically ill patients are being turned away from hospitals, according to revelations in the *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper.

In one in three hospitals in Glasgow over the last month patients lay on trolleys for more than eight hours.

Five hospitals have been forced to close their doors to patients even though they are supposed to be open 24 hours a day.

Bribing war partners

THE US is trying to bribe Turkey with \$4 billion if it backs the US war on Iraq.

The US wants to use Turkish military bases but the new Turkish government is worried about the political fallout.

"If Turkey helps us in the war, we want to help Turkey with the economic consequences of its role in that war," a senior US official told a newspaper.

Seize the chance to make history

WHAT HAPPENS in Britain in the next few weeks will shape history. Everyone in the anti-war movement can be part of making that history.

The clock is ticking relentlessly towards war.

On Monday chief United Nations weapons inspector Hans Blix reported that his team had found no evidence of any Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction".

We cannot trust the UN to block the war.

George Bush wants to unleash devastation on Iraq, whatever the UN says. Tony Blair has made it clear that he wants to ride to war with Bush.

We can stop him. If we stop Blair it can derail Bush's war plans.

The scale of the opposition to war in Britain is terrifying those at the heart of government.

Blair appeared on TV last Sunday to argue the case for war. The BBC conducted a poll among people who had watched. Two thirds rejected Blair's arguments.

The same day a *Sunday Times* poll found that 68 percent thought Blair was wrong.

Bob Worcester, chair of top opinion poll company Mori, says, "These figures would worry every government I've worked with for more than 30 years. The government is tracking the poll data very closely."

Britain and Blair are crucial to Bush's war plans.

Observer journalist Andrew Rawnsley, who is close to top New Labour figures, said, "Going to war without her best ally would leave the White House horribly isolated."

"Ask how Americans feel about going to war without the British and a big majority tell the pollsters that they are against it."

Influential commentators in the US know this.

Nile Gardiner, of the right wing Heritage US think tank, says, "If Blair were to back out the results would be disastrous for the Bush administration."

"It would be much more difficult for Bush to justify the war to the US public if he had to go it alone."

The *New York Times* reported on Sunday that the Bush regime is terrified

Protest rattles Bush's poodle



AROUND 100 people, mainly students, demonstrated outside Tony Blair's meeting at Camden, north London on Thursday of last week. One student managed to confront Blair (see page 4)

that the anti-war movement could swamp Blair.

A US government official told the paper, "For us Blair is the Dutch boy with his finger in the dike," calling to mind the story of a boy who held back the sea threatening to pour through the dike flood defences.

The anti-war movement is the sea that Bush and Blair fear.

Polls and public opinion are not enough to win. They must be translated into a tide of action.

In the next two weeks one thing matters above all else—how widely

we mobilise for the 15 February anti-war demonstration.

That demonstration needs to be the biggest protest march seen in Britain.

It needs to show a determination that we will go beyond marching to civil unrest if Blair still dares to ignore the anti-war message.

Blair must be made to choose between support for Bush and his own survival in office.

There are times when we can make a difference. The days and weeks ahead are such a time.

Blair: 'We'll return refugees to torture'

"THE PROBLEM with removing people is that under the obligations we have you cannot remove someone to a country where they might be subject to torture."

That was the shocking, and sickening, comment made by Tony Blair about refugees on the BBC's *Breakfast with Frost* programme on Sunday.

He was announcing that he was ready to withdraw from those "obligations"—namely the United Nations Convention on Human Rights—in order to send people back to regimes where "they might be subject to torture".

The *Financial Times* business paper noted:

"The apparent inference—that safeguards on torture could be an inconvenient block to asylum controls—will appal many within his party's ranks."

It will appal the vast majority of people in Britain.

It shows where the brutal logic of the witch-hunt against refugees being urged on by the media finally leads.

This is too often echoed by politicians and government ministers.

It is time to call a halt to the attacks on refugees.

Refugees fleeing persecution should be welcome, not live in fear of being sent back to their torturers.

■ Add your name or organisation to the "Stop the war on asylum seekers" statement issued by the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers.

It begins, "We the undersigned condemn utterly the hysteria about asylum seekers being whipped up by sections of the media." It goes on to accuse New Labour of "legitimising racism".

For more information phone CDAS on 07941 566 183 or e-mail info@defend-asylum.org

War on Iraq... Firefighters...

Where is New Labour going?

Speakers:

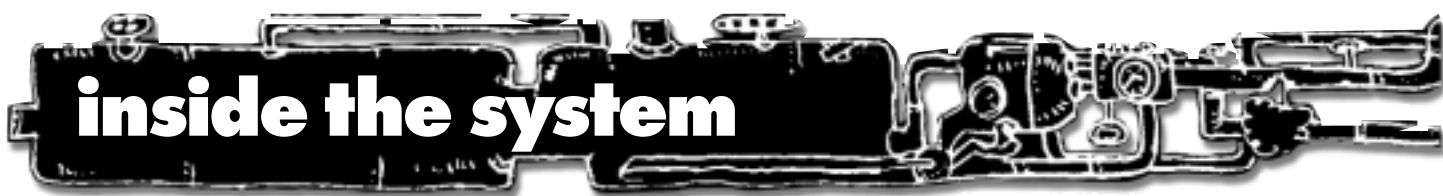
George Galloway MP Bob Crow (RMT general secretary*)

Christine Blower (former NUT president*) Mark Serwotka (PCS general secretary*)

John Rees (Socialist Alliance) Linda Smith (London region FBU treasurer)

*personal capacity

MONDAY 3 MARCH, 7.30PM
FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON



inside the system

THINGS THEY SAY

"IN economic terms a short war in Iraq is better than no war or no regime change."

■INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS report *War and the World Economy*

"A SHORT war could be good for Individual Saving Accounts business."

■MARK DAMPIER, *Money Marketing* magazine

"IF YOU don't violate someone's human rights some of the time you probably aren't doing your job."

■US OFFICIAL in charge of the capture and transfer of prisoners seized in Afghanistan

"I WANT to see everything there is. I want to hold the share certificates and the statues. I want to see the safe deposit boxes opened."

■ATHINA ROUSSEL, who inherited £2.5 billion of the Onassis fortune on Wednesday. She gets another £2.5 billion in three years time

"THE WORLD post 11 September has resulted in a greater desire among people to cocoon themselves in comfort. This means soft fabrics like satin will be back in fashion."

■Interior design magazine *idFX*.

"THE 270,000 members who remain in the Labour Party are pragmatic and moderate types. They're hard-headed about the difficult decisions we have to take. The others have already gone. Six years into the government we're not talking romance."

■LABOUR PARTY OFFICIAL

"IT HAS been a demoralising year for business, while the 'antis' movement seems to have survived rather well."

■BUSINESSMAN at Davos World Economic Forum

DO YOU have a story for Inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH. All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book. Last month's winner was Andrea Butcher

Cloning? Paws for thought

A BIZARRE experiment has shattered much of the nonsense surrounding the recent media debate of cloning.

Scientists in Texas last year produced the world's first cloned cat. The kitten was dubbed Cc, for carbon copy, after it was produced from genes taken from a cat called Rainbow.

But though the two cats are genetically identical, Cc does not even look the same as Rainbow.

Rainbow is a typical tortoiseshell with splotches of brown, tan and gold on white. Cc has a striped grey coat over white.

Rainbow also has a pronounced

tendency to put on weight, while Cc is sleek.

The scientists also report that the cats' characters are entirely different. Rainbow is reserved while Cc is playful and curious.

Wayne Pacelle, of the US Human Society, says the two cats show that "not only does cloning not produce a physical duplicate, but it can never reproduce the behaviour or personality of a cat".

Now, we know people aren't cats, but next time you hear someone go on about how our genes determine everything about us, remember Rainbow and Cc.



Prison tragedy not rare

LEANNE GIDNEY was found hanging in her prison cell last week.

The 18 year old was in jail after being convicted for stealing £1.

She had a drug problem and previous convictions. But instead of Leanne being given the help she needed, she ended up in jail because there were no places available on underfunded drug treatment programmes.

This tragedy is just the latest in an epidemic of prison suicides in Britain. Seven prisoners killed themselves just over the Christmas period.

Last year in all 94 inmates killed themselves. That was a 29 percent rise on the previous year and is an all-time high.

Britain's jails house a record 72,500 inmates. Many are on remand, and

so not convicted of any crime. And many, like Leanne Gidney, are in for petty offences.

The Howard League for Penal Reform says the rise in suicides "is primarily caused by prison overcrowding".

A 16 year old and a 17 year old were among those who killed themselves in prison last year. And almost half of the deaths were of people under the age of 30.

Thick at the top Chemical cocktail DID have serious medical effects

THE MAN standing on the deserted platform at Northallerton station recently couldn't understand why there were no trains to York.

Ray Price used his mobile to phone the Arriva rail company's Service Delivery Centre in York to ask what was happening.

No doubt the hard pressed Arriva workers could barely contain their mirth. Mr Price, you see, is the managing director of Arriva.

His company had plastered posters and media stories around the area telling everyone that track repair work would mean no trains that day and advertising replacement buses.

A NEW study has backed claims by troops who served in the last Gulf War that chemicals they were given have caused severe health problems.

For the last decade successive governments here and in the US have denied there is any evidence for "Gulf War syndrome".

This is despite mounting evidence that thousands of former troops have suffered major health problems.

Symptoms range from loss of muscle strength and movement, loss of balance and coordination, to severe sexual problems

and mood swings.

The new study was carried out by researchers funded by the US Defence Department at Duke University in North Carolina.

They subjected rats to a cocktail of chemicals given to Gulf War troops in 1991 supposedly to protect them from insect-borne diseases and nerve agents. Iraq used no such nerve agents.

The rats, report the US researchers, suffered from exactly the range of symptoms that Gulf veterans have complained of.

The researchers also found that the symptoms

Right royal tomb

ITALIAN PRIME minister Silvio Berlusconi seems to think he is one of ancient Egypt's pharaohs.

He wants to be buried in a pyramid-scale tomb he has built for himself and his family.

Like the pharaohs', Berlusconi's tomb will have enormous decorated reliefs depicting his life and the objects he may need in the afterlife. These include fruit, bread and...a mobile telephone.

Italian law prohibits the burying of the dead "close to human habitation".

But the right wing government has just pushed an amendment to the law through parliament which will allow Berlusconi to be entombed near a city, along with 36 members of his family and aides.

✉Thanks to Mary Griffiths for this story.

★ THE *Daily Mail* ran a story last week attacking the BBC for sending executives on "a £250,000 management course" in the US recently. The *Mail* forgot to mention one small point. Executives from *Mail* owners Associated Newspapers attended exactly the same course.

Prize for pollution

ENERGY COMPANY bosses did well in the New Year's Honours list.

Phil Watts, chairman of Shell, was knighted for his work on the "World Business Council on Sustainable Development".

This green-sounding body was the business lobby which blocked further regulation of multinationals at last year's Johannesburg Earth Summit.

Huge meetings



IAN WILSON confronts Blair

'Why I stood up to Tony Blair'

IAIN WILSON hit the headlines last week when he heckled Tony Blair at a meeting in Camden, north London. Iain told *Socialist Worker*:

"There was no way I couldn't do what I did. There were so many people who would have liked to ask these questions—I had the chance to do it.

"The whole event was so stage-managed. It was for a select, invited few, but the issue of Iraq affected everyone.

"They are afraid of the fact that the majority of the trade unions and students are against the war.

"Tony Blair is just one person. We are the vast majority. If we all stand together we can stop the war."



PROTEST IN Blair's constituency

Sedgefield protest

"OVER 100 local people turned out on a bitter cold and windy Saturday in Sedgefield at the heart of Tony Blair's constituency to call on their MP not to lead Britain into war," reports Alan Docherty.

"The vigil was organised by former Labour Party members and the local vicar. It is now likely that a coach will start from Sedgefield for the 15 February demo."



MARCHING ON US Base

Fairford demo

"OVER 1,000 protesters rallied at Fairford, Gloucestershire, before marching towards the nearby US air force base last Saturday," reports Jeff Brewster.

"The event was organised by the 'Gloucestershire Weapons Inspectors' to protest at the proposed use of the base to attack Iraq."

protests, anti-war actions sweep Britain

‘THE BIGGEST political meeting in the town I can remember in 30 years—and the first when we’ve had to turn people away.’

That was how local activist Jane Hardy described the Stop the War Coalition public meeting in **St Albans** last Thursday, as 350 people packed into a school hall.

Fellow St Albans activist Neil Faulkner reports that people “overflowed onto stage, aisles and stairways, while 100 more left outside held impromptu debates”.

Brockley, in south east London, also saw the biggest political meeting anyone could remember last week, as over 600 people rallied in opposition to war.

There too the room was packed to overflowing. Every seat was taken—people sat on the floor, and jammed into every available space.

What made the turnout even more astonishing was that everyone had paid to come in, with the meeting also aimed at raising funds for the leaflets and posters to build the 15 February anti-war demo.

Further north, **York** also saw “its largest political meeting in decades, and the birth of a genuine mass movement in the city”, reports local anti-war activist Frank Ormston. Over 450 people packed into the meeting.

Already ten coaches from York are booked for the 15 February anti-war demo—compared with three coaches which travelled from the city for the 400,000-strong anti-war demo last September.

This trio of meetings is not unusual or exceptional.

In every corner of Britain, in cities, towns and villages people are rallying, determined to act to stop Blair backing Bush’s war.

Many of the meetings have seen delegations arriving from local workplaces too, giving a sense of how the movement can spread to factories and offices, as well as down to street and estate level.

In York there were delegations of council workers, firefighters and rail workers at the meeting, along with large numbers of students from the city’s university.

At the Brockley meeting in south east London many came in groups from local workplaces.

Anna O’Brien was with fellow teachers from Crofton secondary school.

“There are 15 of us here tonight, about a fifth of all the teaching staff in the school,” she told *Socialist Worker*.

“We hope to go to the 15 February demonstration as a big delegation from the school now, with people bringing their families and friends.”

Glenn Clark, a firefighter from Deptford station taking part in the national strike that day, also addressed the meeting. Afterwards he told *Socialist Worker* how, “On my station I would say about 80 per cent of people are now against the war.”

“You do get arguments, but when you explain the issues about the war you can convince people. We hope to get a good turnout for 15 February.”

Many other people came to the meeting as individuals, but were determined to do what they could to build the anti-war movement.

Paul Summers works as a driving instructor for the AA: “I came here because I think we can and must stop this war. I was part of the anti poll tax movement and we beat Thatcher, and we can beat Blair now.



Picture: SOCIALIST WORKER

PEOPLE JAMMED into every available space at a south east London rally—just one of a wave of huge meetings against war

‘We’ve never seen anything like this’

“I talk to people I teach about the war, about 15 February. Nobody seems to be in favour of war. But we have to convince people they have to protest if we want to stop it.”

Many places have seen impressive outdoor rallies or protest marches against the war.

In **Nottingham** last Saturday some 500 people turned up for a rally, reports local activist John Shemeld.

Sarah Piggot reports that “500 people braved driving rain on Saturday to take part in an anti-war demonstration in **Colchester**”.

And from **Norwich** Trevor Phillips reports that “700 or 800 anti-war protesters brought shopping streets to a standstill here last Saturday.

“Giant puppets bearing the faces of war victims—features of innocent Arab men and women who might be victims of a war on Iraq—were carried amid a lengthy street procession. The event was loud and musical, with people of all ages and appearances.”

The anti-war movement is galvanising people everywhere, with many towns sending coaches to a London demo for the first time ever.

Lizi Allnatt from **Exeter** reports a “truly astonishing response from the towns and villages of **Devon**.”

“As well as our four coaches from Exeter already we know of coaches going from Crediton, Barnstaple, Exmouth, Bideford, Newton Abbot, Totnes, Instow and possibly Chagford.

“We are hearing of more coaches being booked every day, and we still have two weeks to go before the march!”

In major cities the movement is spreading down from city-wide rallies to meetings in local areas or in satellite towns and suburbs.

Angela Shann reports how “60 people turned up to the Sharrow Stop the War Coalition meeting in **Sheffield** this week to watch the *Not In My Name* video and discuss building the anti-war movement in the ward.

“Sharrow is a multi-ethnic inner city area, which the meeting reflected with many people from the Muslim community attending.

“The meeting made a number of practical plans such as doing a weekly stall at a

local mosque, making a banner, organising coaches to the 15 February demo and lobbying our pro-war MP, Richard Cabourn.”

From **Glasgow** Aftab Anwar reports that “over 160 people attended a meeting in Pollokshields and over 80 people attended a meeting in Glasgow’s East End”.

Paul Sillett reports that “over 100 people attended a public meeting on the war on Iraq in **Ormskirk**, near Liverpool, last Friday.

“Anti-war campaigners are now hoping to take a coach from Ormskirk to the 15 February demo.”

The anti-war message was also carried to parliament last week, when hundreds of people queued to lobby their MPs on Tuesday.

‘People are mobilising in every area of our city’

ANTI-WAR ACTIVISTS were out in force across the Greater Manchester area last Saturday to organise opposition to the war and a huge presence at the anti-war march on 15 February.

“The response on the streets has been amazing,” says Richard Searle of the Stop the War Coalition.

“There have been stalls in almost every area in Greater Manchester today.

“There are lots of places that have coaches booked that didn’t have coaches last time, like Stockport and Gorton. And there are local meetings taking place all over Greater Manchester in the next few weeks.”

Dave McNally explained, “We plan to leaflet every house in Chorlton about the march. We’ve got four coaches booked from Chorlton and two from Whalley Range.

Rick from Whalley Range says, “I’ve been really surprised by the take-up. This is the first time a coach has been organised from Whalley Range to a protest.

“We’ve filled a coach and a half already. I’ve spent this morning going round shops putting up leaflets. Shopkeepers have been more than willing to display materials.”

Mosques

A local mosque has now asked for 100 seats on the Whalley Range transport—so more coaches will have to be booked. Dave Roberts tells how “there’s one coach organised from Eccles near Salford.”

Ameen Hadi adds, “In Oldham the local coalition has booked four coaches. Twenty people came to an organising meeting last week. Local churches and

mosques have agreed to do collections for us.

“One of the most important things that’s coming out of it is that it’s bringing the Asian, white and black communities together in an area the Nazi BNP is targeting.”

Rita McLaughlin is a GMB union member who lives in Prestwich. “Three of us have leafleted the council estate that I live on for a local meeting where people can discuss what we can do against war,” she says.

Activists are also organising to get big delegations of students.

“We’ve got six coaches booked already. I think we might have to get another four,” says James from Manchester University.

“In my student halls people are coming up to me and asking me for tickets.”

Fergus Alexander, another student at the university, says, “I’ve started to set up an Architects Against the War group on my course.

“There’s a statement by Richard Rogers and other prominent architects against the war that I’m using. I’ve organised a meeting for the first week in February that two lecturers are going to speak at.

“I stood up in my lecture last Friday and let people know this was going on. My lecturer made me put my e-mail address on the board and everyone took it down.”

School students are mobilising too. “Between 15 and 20 people in our year are definitely against war. About ten will come to the march,” explained Matt Kelly and Phil Ardale, 15 year olds at St Ambrose School near Altrincham.



Picture: SOCIALIST WORKER

CAMPAIGNING in Manchester

Fax 020 7538 0140
E-mail letters@socialistworker.co.uk

or send to

letters

PO Box 82 London E3 3LH

Union leaders are handing over our money to New Labour

Bosses off on a shopping spree

THE FRENZY about which supermarket group should be allowed to grab Safeway entirely misses out the interests of the consumer.

Sainsbury's, Tesco and Asda already have nearly 70 percent of the British grocery trade between them. This is now set to get much worse.

Safeway's market share will give another 6 percent of the trade to someone.

Supermarket prices are cheap for a very small range of goods but on most items they charge inflated rates—that's how they make such big profits!

Any government that was

serious about protecting the consumer would pass legislation to ensure that no group had more than, say, a 10 percent market share and would come down hard on any price fixing and collusion.

We can expect nothing of the sort from New Labour, especially as Lord Sainsbury has been given such a prominent role in government.

I would urge everybody to shop at independent retailers and street markets that, although they make a profit, are not in the pockets of a tiny elite that is destroying our food and freedom.

□ HENRY BAXTER, Oxford

Don't be drowned in a sea of debt

PAUL McGARR is quite right to knock on the head the idea that having a mortgage makes you middle class.

Many who exercised their right to buy council houses didn't become middle class overnight.

Councils have stopped building houses and have sold many off. In parts of Cardiff you could wait 900 years unless you were a "priority" case!

Private renting is as expensive as a mortgage.

People who get into

mortgage arrears don't know they can repay their arrears during the length of the mortgage.

They end up getting their homes repossessed—and the mortgage companies still chase them for the shortfall after the house has been sold at auction for peanuts.

People in difficulty should get help from the Citizens Advice Bureau, Shelter or Age Concern.

□ TERESA GOSS, Citizens Advice Bureau case worker, Cardiff

Armed gangs wear police uniforms

A HUGE force of 200 police, many carrying shotguns, are policing the areas of Stapleton Road in Easton and Grosvenor Road in St Pauls, Bristol, nightly.

They swooped in on Wednesday 15 January, operating a stop and search policy on every male aged between 17 and 30.

The guns are out of sight in the daylight, but at 5pm they're back out. Community residents have complained of excessive stop and search of black youth.

Police openly admitted

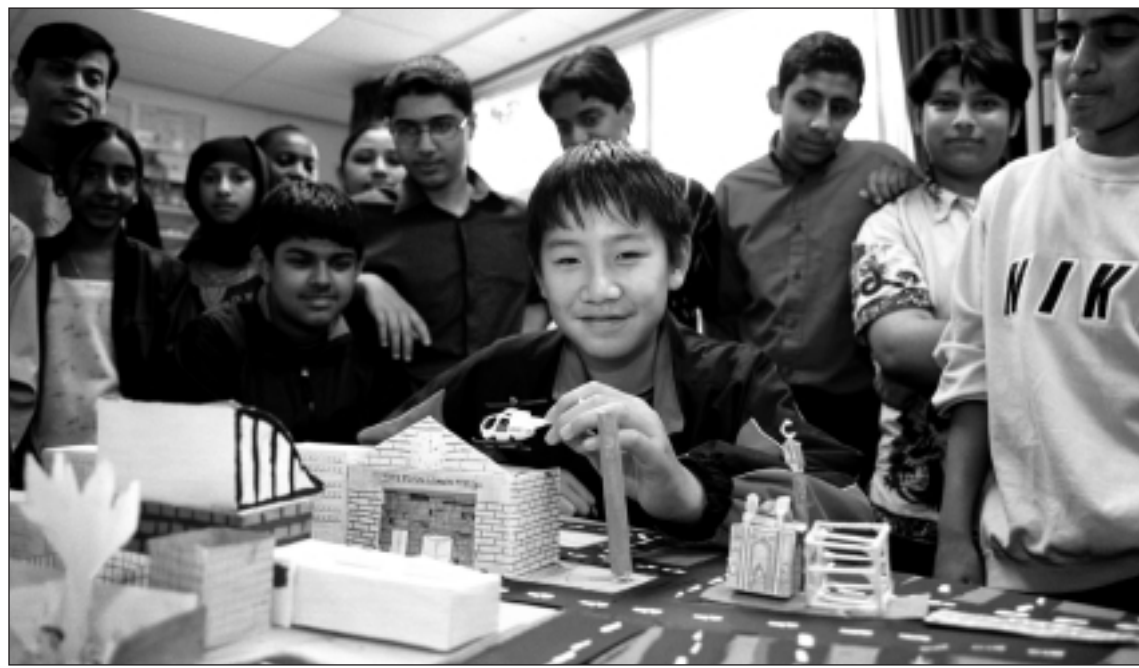
that any black man wearing a hood or a baseball cap would be stopped and questioned.

A meeting of 60 local residents and community workers in St Pauls was told that "this was an exercise in reassurance" by police divisional commander Mike Rowe.

Bristol City Council has just approved a £500 million shopping mall right next to St Pauls, with horrendous traffic and roadworks implications.

But nothing is going on housing, education or employment measures.

□ MATT CLEMENT, Bristol



Picture: JESS HURD

NEW LABOUR doesn't want all children to develop skills

Learning to toe the class line?

LABOUR'S CHANGES in education will mean many students are expected to choose their future jobs aged just 13.

They won't have to learn foreign languages, history or technology. Instead they will be taught a narrower work-based curriculum tailored to meet the demands of employers.

No prizes for guessing which students will get to do hairdressing and plumbing.

This plan will reinforce selection between and within schools, separating the academic sheep

from the working class goats.

It will undermine the principle of comprehensive education, already under attack from New Labour.

It's no wonder many of our teenagers are fed up with school.

Our kids are already the most tested in Europe.

They're coached for the SATs all the way through year six when music, art, history and geography are all sacrificed in favour of a Gradgrind curriculum of exam preparation.

They come to secondary school already labelled successes or failures.

And there the target setting and testing continue, as schools desperately try to look good in the league tables.

Socialists believe education should be about opening up opportunities for young people, encouraging them to reach their full human potential and broadening their horizons.

Labour wants a system where children are taught to "know their place"—while the "cleverer" ones can go on to university secure in the knowledge that a lifetime of debt awaits them.

□ FRAN POSTLETHWAITE, Barnsley

VIEWS ON WAR... VIEWS ON WAR...

Arms race

TO ADD to Sue Ram's letter "Trouble on t'moor", there is growing anger inside and outside parliament at the up-grading of Fylingdales Base in North Yorkshire.

The base will be part of Bush's Son of Star Wars scheme.

There are fears that this will relaunch the nuclear arms race.

North Korea has said it is going to leave the non-proliferation treaty, China is expanding its nuclear programme and this is certain to be followed by India and Pakistan.

Local residents complain that car alarms go off and car immobilisers stop cars in their tracks near the base.

If the base does this to cars, what does it do to the human body?

□ JOHN APPLEBYARD, Leeds

No barrier

THE UNITED Nations bound member states to "settle international disputes by peaceful means and to refrain from the threat or use of force against any state".

When the UN was set up in New York in 1949, I was one of many who were opposed to it. It was obvious that the US would use the UN to its own advantage as it is now doing.

The war planned against Iraq, the killing of women and children, is not only immoral—it is against international law. We must stop this war and deal with the cause of war, which is imperialism, in this case US imperialism.

You cannot ask people to die for oil.

□ RON ACOCK, Ilkeston

Bomb zones



IT IS crucial that we do everything we can to stop the war.

But the US and Britain have already started bombing Iraq, or rather they never stopped.

Bombing of the "no-fly zones" over Iraq has increased by 300 percent in the last few weeks.

There is absolutely no UN authorisation for this destructive, murderous and almost secret war.

Bush and Blair aren't waiting for UN backing before they start the killing.

□ JULIE TOMMS, Loughborough

postal points

■ A YORK council meeting ended in uproar as scores of angry York City Football Club fans demanded it compulsorily purchases the club's ground.

Persimmon Homes' plans to build luxury homes could force the closure of York City and net a £2 million fortune for stadium owner Douglas Craig.

The New Labour council refused point blank to consider compulsory purchase.

□ FRANK ORMSTON

■ A VERY successful launch meeting was held on Friday of last week to campaign against any "arm's length" proposals for Nottingham City Council housing stock.

Over 30 people came to the meeting called by Nottingham City Unison,

AS A result of the financial crisis in the Labour Party the GMB union is set to increase its affiliation fees to Blair.

A report in the *Financial Times* last week indicated a deal worth some £40 million over the next five years is being arranged with the trade unions to bail out Blair.

The deal is being planned despite Blair's insistence on burdening the unions with the cost of holding political fund ballots in 2004.

News of this deal is extremely shocking given New Labour's drive to war and its attacks on firefighters.

Pleas

And the deal is being considered despite the government ignoring GMB pleas to limit the role of the private sector in public services.

Fortunately motions regarding the democratisation of the union's political fund will be discussed at the GMB congress in June this year.

These argue for the political fund to be opened up to other political organisations, like the Scottish Socialist Party and the Socialist Alliance, which back the firefighters and oppose privatisation and war.

□ HENRY RAJCH, branch secretary, Barnsley GMB (personal capacity)

Wading through gutter

PRESS COMMENTS on Rebekah Wade's appointment as editor of the *Sun* were muted.

She directly incited vigilantism in the "name and shame" witch-hunt she launched in the *News of the World* last year.

Rebekah Wade subsequently showed cowardice unique in the history of British journalism. She refused to speak, to give an interview or take part in a debate.

Most shamefully of all, she hid behind the tragic parents of Sarah Payne, who she exploited.

For these reasons other newspapers have a responsibility to counteract any public effect she may have as editor of the *Sun*.

□ JACK PAULIN, East London

with a number of shop stewards and local tenants present.

The City Unison branch has already organised one bus to the lobby of parliament on 29 January.

□ RICHARD BUCKWELL

■ LOTS OF people enjoyed the *Bremner, Bird and Fortune* special programme on Iraq.

If you missed it, you can download the script by visiting www.channel4.com and typing "Bremner" into the search box.

□ PETE ELLIS, Retford

■ REGARDING Martin Smith's review of *Gangs of New York*, why glorify non-historical, blockbuster, profit making, capitalist middle class voyeurism of inner city violence and deprivation?

Current "entertainments" are even more brain scrambling diversions than religion ever was or is.

In the absence of truly socialist film-makers, truly socialist reviews are vital.

□ H HASTON, by e-mail

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'Not posh'

I AM writing concerning your article "Hodge Doffs Caps To Posh Schools".

I agree that under a fair system there would be no private schools.

But your article implies that everyone from a private school is bad, posh and has nothing to do with socialism.

I went to a private school, not a particularly expensive one, and by 17 was involved in socialist politics.

□ NATALIE SEDACCA, Cambridge

Nazi BNP councillor elected in Halifax

A vital challenge for unions and activists

THE ELECTION last week of a fifth Nazi British National Party (BNP) councillor in Britain needs an urgent response.

Adrian Marsden got 679 votes to become BNP councillor in the Mixenden ward in Halifax, West Yorkshire. He beat the Liberal Democrat candidate by just 28 votes and Labour by 38 votes.

Many people in Halifax's shopping centre last Saturday were shocked and revolted at the election result.

But the result cannot simply be put down to disappointed Labour voters making a protest vote.

The Labour vote dropped by around 100 since the council election last year. The Tory vote has slid from 658 in 2000 to just 214 votes last week.

The Mixenden vote also showed a higher turnout—some 37.2 percent—than last year.

The BNP tried to build on the basis of people's general disaffection with the three main political parties.

It poured people into Mixenden, an ordinary working class estate.

"It felt like they came round with a leaflet every day, much more than the other parties. Sometimes they would knock on people's doors as well," said Margaret, a local resident.

One local issue the BNP picked up on was that councillors' had approved a 43 percent rise in their allowances.

But its main target was asylum seekers. It tuned into the scaremongering over refugees that the press and politicians have whipped up nationally, which increased further as the election was taking place.

"British Press Help Spread BNP's Message", said the BNP's website, underneath a typical *Daily Express* front page.

The anti-refugee hysteria reached new heights last week with the *Sun's* "crusade" against asylum seekers.

It responded to the *Daily Mirror's* petition against the war with its own petition against refugees.

The *Sun* said, "100,000 *Sun* readers are like coiled springs", after home secretary David Blunkett warned about growing tension over refugees.

There is no doubt that such press stories were enough to deliver the BNP the 28 votes it needed to win.

The BNP's gains have worried ministers. David Blunkett said, "The rise of the BNP in any area is a signal to all of us. We need to see them off."

Yet in the next breath he claimed the government had to address people's "legitimate concerns" over refugees.

New Labour's instinct every time it has faced such opposition is to shift to the right.

This compromise with racism hasn't undermined the Nazis. It has given them confidence.

This is exactly what happened in the 1970s.

Then it took mass mobilisation around the Anti Nazi League to break the Nazis, not pandering to racist arguments.



THE ELECTION of a fifth Nazi councillor needs an urgent response from trade unions and anti-racist activists

Crisis across Europe

THE GROWTH of the BNP today is not a "blip" or a local phenomenon in a small part of north west England.

It reflects one aspect of the political crisis and polarisation that is taking place across Europe.

Labour parties which have remodelled themselves as parties of the centre were elected in 13 out of 15 countries across the European Union over the past few years.

They reflected people's hopes of change for the better.

Yet in government those parties have eagerly pursued hated neo-liberal policies of privatisation and cuts.

The lives of millions of ordinary people have not improved, and they feel bitter and angry.

Some of those governments have since been voted out. Others have lost substantial support.

In Britain New Labour was re-elected in 2001 with the lowest turnout since 1918, having lost 2.8 million votes.

Blair has continued forcing through privatisation in the NHS, education and across public services.

Many people's lives are racked with insecurity.

They suffer more stress at work and see the health service, schools, transport and housing crumble around them.

A significant number of people have looked to parties of the left.

There have been the inspiring anti-capitalist protests and anti-war demonstrations. There is growing resistance in trade unions.

But some people have also looked to the right.

Le Pen in France got 17 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections last year, beating the ruling Socialist Party (France's Labour Party) candidate.

No one should treat the election of five BNP councillors lightly.

Le Pen's National Front made its first breakthrough winning seats in a local council in the run-down industrial town of Dreux, west of Paris, in 1983.

A year later it got two million votes in European elections.

By 1997 it stunned everyone by securing control of four major local councils.

Their rise has produced mass resistance against them.

Unfortunately, it has not succeeded in decisively finishing off the Nazi threat.

We need mass resistance to the growth of the Nazis in Britain.

The BNP wants to capitalise on the "respectable" image that the media and politicians have allowed it to get away with.

It plans more candidates in the council elections in May. The BNP says it wants to extend the number of its councillors in the north west and go beyond that area.

Its electoral campaign will give confidence to the thugs at its Nazi core. Marsden has already been exposed in the *Sunday Mirror* as having been a leading member of the violent Nazi group Combat 18.

Our task is to reveal that true

Nazi face. Halifax MP and leading anti-war campaigner Alice Mahon has urged people to get active against the Nazis. "The truth is they are as ugly and vicious as ever," she said.

Organise against far right

THE MOVEMENT that succeeded in booting Nazi BNP councillor Derek Beackon out of east London's Isle of Dogs in 1993-4 has lessons for us today.

The then TUC leader John Monks came to the area to speak out against the Nazis in the days after the election.

Labour MPs Frank Dobson and Nick Raynsford came to campaign in the area later.

The TUC went on to call a major demonstration in east London which attracted 40,000 people.

The march changed the atmosphere in the area, boosting the confidence of people to go out onto estates and argue against the BNP.

This meant directly confronting racist arguments from local people.

Importantly, activists immersed themselves in local campaigns over issues like housing and cuts to local health and welfare services.

Those campaigns united people locally and acted to expose the BNP's claim that they stand up for local people's concerns.

What a difference it would make today if union leaders were going door to door in areas like Mixenden, arguing against the BNP.

TGWU leader Bill Morris has been a principled opponent of New Labour's attacks on refugees.

If he mobilised scores of trade unionists to go round urging people not to blame refugees but to campaign for better services, the BNP would be isolated.

Building the Anti Nazi League is vital to winning broad layers of people to confront the Nazis.

But the scale of the Nazi threat is such that we need to mobilise the battalions of the trade union movement.

Their activity, not just well meaning resolutions in union branches, is vital to show that the majority do not support the Nazis and drive them back to the margins where they belong.

We also need to build a socialist movement that can offer hope and a progressive way forward to the millions of disillusioned people around Britain.

Anti Nazi League conference

Saturday 8 February, from 10am
Contact Theatre, Manchester

A day of workshops, reports, ideas and discussion on how we can fight racism and fascism

PLUS Love Music Hate Racism gig in the evening

Phone 020 7924 0333 or e-mail conference@anl.org.uk

socialism from below

The price of not having any control

WORK dominates our lives. Yet it is often the thing we hate the most.

Why? After all, work is part of what being human is about. People have always worked on the natural world to secure the necessities of life.

Work can be a pleasure too. Look at the enthusiasm with which people pursue hobbies.

But in capitalist society the experience of work is different.

The socialist Karl Marx summed it up 150 years ago in a way that still rings true today:

"The worker feels himself only when he is not working; when he is working he does not feel himself. He is at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working."

Under capitalism, argued Marx, work is "not the satisfaction of a need, but a mere means to satisfy need outside itself. Its alien character is clearly demonstrated by the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists it is shunned like the plague."

This "alienation" is rooted in a lack of control.

We have no control over the things we produce. Workers don't decide what to produce. It is not "theirs", either individually or collectively.

We produce commodities solely to be exchanged on the marketplace in order to make a profit for the boss.

We have also lost control over the labour process. Capitalist production is based on a greater and greater division of labour—any human individuality in the process is seen as an error.

Our ability to work is simply another commodity the bosses buy and we sell.

Every aspect of our lives is affected by this alienation at work and the way society is organised.

Our relationships with other people are shaped by the fragmented and competitive way we live.

SALLY CAMPBELL asks what's in a word: alienation

Anyone who has travelled on the tube in the rush hour has felt this. City life brings us closer together than ever, yet we feel more isolated.

The pressures of everyday life can tear families apart. Our personal relationships and sexuality are distorted.

Nothing escapes the confines of the market.

The alienation rooted in capitalist production reflects itself in grotesque ways. The methods that human society has developed have created a world that now seems to be beyond our control.

Warfare

Genetically modified foods, nuclear warfare and environmental crisis all threaten the world and our future, even though they are the result of human knowledge and technology that could have been used to improve our lives.

One result of all this is that it tends to make people feel powerless and accept things the way they are.

This is not because we believe everything we read in the *Sun*, but because our daily experience is of a fragmented, competitive world, in which everything is a market relation.

There is a meat market and a car market, next to the labour market and the sex market—even my local library has been renamed "The Ideas Store"!

The "market" appears as natural as the weather, rather than what it actually is—a human creation, fuelled every day by human labour.

But this is only one side of the picture.

Labour is a commodity in the market, but in one crucial aspect it is one unlike any other.

Henry Ford complained, "Why is it that every time I ask for a pair of hands, I get a human being?"

He was summing up the problem faced by all bosses. Workers don't just always accept things the way they are. We can fight back.

In countless ways the reality of life under capitalism pushes some individuals to reject the way things are, to fight to change things.

And the way society and production are organised means that the majority of workers at some point are pushed towards resistance.

Workers are living commodities, tied into an antagonistic relationship with the bosses.

This basic antagonism produces class struggle. This struggle takes place every day, in every battle over conditions and every political struggle, no matter how big or small.

Sometimes the powerlessness workers feel has the upper hand and such struggles are low key, almost hidden.

But then the pressures people face can lead to wider struggles or great social upheavals.

Expose

Such large-scale collective struggle can expose the false divisions—the racism, sexism, nationalism and so on—that keep us fighting among ourselves.

And it is in such struggles too that millions of people can begin to feel their collective strength and see that they have the power to make the slogan "Another world is possible" a reality.

That world would be one in which we can really express and develop our individuality, not the fake individuality of logos and brands.

It would be a world based on human need, and democracy—with workers collectively taking decisions about what we make and how we distribute it.

Only then could we start to develop relationships with each other, and with nature, based on respect and not on exploitation.

And maybe we would all love Mondays too.

Now the parasites are taking over these mansions

(How many more do you expect us to take, Mr Blair?)

NO. We're NOT talking about asylum seekers...

The mansions pictured here are owned by two English men.

Chilham Castle (bottom right) belongs to multimillionaire Stuart Wheeler.

He bought the 400-acre estate in Kent because he said the three people in his family "needed somewhere bigger to live".

He makes no worthwhile contribution to society and got his fortune from a gambling business.

He has, however, contributed £5 million to the Tories.

Dodington Park (above) belongs to James Dyson, the vacuum cleaner millionaire.

He forked out £15 million for the mansion, which sits in a modest 300 acres near Bath. It was built in the 16th century

with money from the slave trade.

Dyson knows a thing or two about slave labour. He shut his factory in Britain (sacking 800 workers) and moved production to Malaysia, where he pays just £1.50 an hour.

Nauseating

Dyson and Wheeler are just two examples of the parasites living the high life in palatial homes in Britain.

"New country houses for the mega-rich are rising on a scale unknown since the 1940s," said an *Observer* article last year.

"This spate of building conspicuous private mansions suggests a new confidence and ostentation among the rich."

Exclusive estate agent Knight Frank says, "The number of

people looking at £1 million homes defies belief.

"Even above £2 million there are around 1,320 cash buyers looking at the moment, and only about 360 houses in that bracket came onto the market last year."

You could have read about Dyson's and Wheeler's new homes in glowing articles in the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* last week.

The nauseating lifestyle features came a few pages after both papers spewed out bile about refugees who are forced into temporary accommodation centres.

That's not really surprising. The millionaire-owned press have every interest in getting the rest of us to blame anyone but the millionaires for the problems we face.

Dodington Park

Chilham Castle

KOREA, CONGO, IRAQ

When United Nations backed unjust wars

BUSH AND Blair would like to have United Nations (UN) backing for a war on Iraq.

Opinion polls show that UN support would blunt opposition to a war from some people.

Nobody should believe that UN support means that a war will be more just. Nor can the UN be relied on to block war.

The UN has repeatedly been used as camouflage for wars fought purely in the interests of the most powerful states, principally the US.

SOUTH KOREAN soldiers arrest a North Korean combatant. Two million died during the Korean War, backed by the UN

He horrified the Belgian authorities and the multinational companies when his early speeches suggested he would refuse to be a Western puppet.

Belgium immediately began to plot to remove Lumumba.

Belgian officers fled to Congo's mineral-rich Katanga province and "encouraged" it to declare independence from the central government.

Lumumba responded by appealing to the UN for military aid. UN troops soon arrived.

But they acted throughout as protectors of the illegal breakaway regime and as a buffer that pre-

'I want to spread a belt of radioactive cobalt from the Sea of Japan to the Yellow Sea.'

■ US GENERAL MACARTHUR on the Korean War

vented Lumumba's forces defeating the Katangan government.

The UN was well aware of where its role was leading. In an internal memorandum UN secretary general Dag Hammarskjöld wrote, "The UN effort could not continue with Lumumba in office. One or the other would have to go."

UN forces allowed a Belgian aircraft into Katanga with nine tonnes of weapons for the opposition.

The US, Belgian and British governments now worked to have Lumumba declared an "illegitimate leader" and to murder him with UN support.

Atomic weapons were not used. But every other barbaric method of war was.

The war killed at least two million Korean civilians. The UN had backed it all.

Congo 1960

The colonial power Belgium was forced out of central Africa's Congo in 1960. The people elected a radical, Patrice Lumumba, as prime minister.

Gulf War 1990-1991 GEORGE BUSH Sr's war for oil against Iraq was fought with UN backing.

James Baker, the US Secretary of State, met the foreign ministers of each of the other 14 member countries of the UN Security Council.

He offered a combination of bribes and threats in order to make them back a resolution allowing an attack on Iraq.

In 1990 Egypt was the most indebted country in Africa. Baker bribed President Mubarak with \$14 billion in "debt forgiveness".

Syria's president, Assad, was given the green light to wipe out all opposition to Syria's rule in Lebanon.

Some \$1 billion of arms was made available.

The US gave Iran a promise to drop its opposition to a series of World Bank loans. The bank approved the first loan of \$250 million on the day before the ground attack on Iraq.

Russia was desperate for economic assistance. President Bush sent the Saudi Arabian foreign minister to Moscow to offer \$1 billion.

After Russian leader Gorbachev agreed to the war resolution, another \$3 billion came from other Gulf states.

The chair of the Security Council at the time was Zaire (formerly Congo). Its rulers were offered debt forgiveness and military equipment in return for making sure the Security Council met when, and only when, the US wanted.

When it came to the vote, 12 states voted for the attack resolution. Yemen and Cuba voted against and China abstained.

Minutes after the resolution was passed, US ambassador Pickering told the Yemeni ambassador, "That was the most expensive no vote you ever cast."

Within three days the US halted a \$70 million aid programme to one of the world's poorest countries. Some 800,000 Yemeni workers were expelled from Saudi Arabia.

Such pressures won UN backing for the assault on Iraq in 1991—and they will be used in 2003.

by CHARLIE KIMBER

INTERVIEW WITH FORMER ARMY COMMANDER

A QUARTER OF the British army has been sent to fight in Iraq

Iraq war? No tanks

Picture: PA PHOTOS

JAMES THORNE is a former commander in the Royal Tank Regiment. He was trained at Sandhurst, the elite school for army officers.

James came from a military family and joined the army for a career. He served in Cyprus and Northern Ireland.

He tells *Socialist Worker* why he is now opposed to war.

Why are you against war on Iraq?

None of the justifications that have been put forward stand up, and unless there's a good reason for it, it shouldn't be done because it's going to cost lives.

The issue of weapons of mass destruction is hypocrisy. The US and Britain have them.

The term is misleading. It excludes altitude bombing. Why? Because it's what we use.

The reason North Korea is being left alone is because it has a more credible deterrent.

The fact that Iraq's being hassled almost proves they haven't got weapons of mass destruction.

It's about oil. It is imperialist and about grabbing resources. The government would like us to choose between Bush and Saddam Hussein.

Well, no. They're both products of US imperialism.

How did you get involved in the anti-war movement?

I've been involved in organising since last September. For the first year after the Afghanistan war I was just going to demonstrations.

I've got some knowledge of organising and setting up networks from my army days. I'm using a lot of what I learnt back then for a much better cause.

Before the Afghan War I'd got to the stage of shaking my head at the TV. That war sparked me into action.

Over the summer of 2001 I'd read *Captive State* by George Monbiot. He's right to say that we all have to participate more actively if we want democracy.

September 11 and the Afghan situation presented a very clear cause.

What do people in the army think about attacking Iraq?

The general attitude of the people I know, who are mainly officers, is a kind of shame that Britain's doing the US's bidding. They're all fairly patriotic.

These guys read widely and understand quite well what it's about. Some of them can live with that—others might find it more difficult.

Part of the military self image is that they're tough guys. Everyone knows that the last Gulf War in 1991 was a massacre.

That doesn't fit nicely with their self image.

The father of a friend of mine was a senior officer in the last Gulf War. He felt disappointed because he didn't feel they'd fought a war.

Well, 200,000 dead Iraqis certainly felt like they'd been in a war.

Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of it, the Falklands War is regarded, as far as the fighting went, as quite "glorious" because it was a tough fight.

The US and Britain are planning an ambitious mission this time, including occupying Iraq.

This means it's going to be Northern Ireland on the Euphrates.

A quarter of the British army is being sent to the Gulf. This is a pretty bleak prospect for the troops and their families.

When did you start to question the army and war?

I'm not a pacifist. I certainly believe there are some things worth resisting, through force if necessary.

Because of the travel you get to see a bit more of the world. You stop believing what the *Daily Mail* says about foreigners.

The army is all about teamwork at junior level. Obviously at the top level it's based on exploitation.

The day to day experience of junior officers and soldiers is one of looking after each other.

Soldiers don't fight for their queen and country or for the good old regimental traditions. They fight for survival with the guys that they're with.

What armies do is put people in that situation, and of course they have to fight.

I've always thought that everyone should look after everyone else, and everyone should work in a team. It doesn't take long to realise that doesn't have to be confined to the 20 guys around you.

I also read about modern guerrilla wars, Nicaragua for example, because I was interested in tactics. Then you start to come across the politics.

I began to think, "These communists have a point."

My values haven't changed much, but the information I have about the way the world works has come along.

What examples of resistance in the army inspire you?

There was a lot of cooperation between opposing troops during the First World War.

The football matches and Christmas truces are well known, but the troops also colluded in ways that were harder for High Command to prevent.

Troops often fired high or routinised their firing. If they always fired their mortars at the same time each day at the same targets, opposing battalions would know to keep out of that area.

Who were the enemies in the First World War? People might say the British and the Germans.

I say, isn't it obvious that working class people from both countries had more in common with each other than they did with the rulers of their own countries?

After four years this became apparent to the people doing the fighting.

The First World War ended with revolution in Russia, and Germany fought on until it was on the brink of revolution. British troops were also reaching this stage by 1919, and it's a proud history.

Units that were regarded as elite, like the Royal Marines, mutinied at the Russian city of Archangel.

They were told they were going to defend the Russians from the Bolshevik forces. When they got to Archangel they found they were being used for offensive operations.

Why did you join the army?

It's something I'd wanted to do since I was young. My dad was in the air force and my brother was in the army.

I joined the army in August 1995, straight after I left university.

I joined for a lot of reasons other people do, for the things that the army presents itself as being—a good career, travel, activity, teamwork, problem solving, challenges.

I did a year's officer training in Sandhurst. Then I trained as a tank commander.

I left the army in August 1999.

Why did you leave the army?

One of the reasons was the feeling that the army was overstretched even then.

Everyone understands that on an operational tour you go away for six months and work 24 hours a day.

But in between, when you expect some time off, we would sometimes lose leave for trivial reasons.

I was beginning to find that the army was offering opportunities to solve problems but only within certain parameters.

I became more interested in how you might avoid the problems, for example war, in the first place.

Young officers are expected to live a certain lifestyle, therefore needing private

incomes.

You can be judged in these terms more than on professional merit.

This elitism is particularly prevalent in the cavalry and the guards, who have close links with the royal family and the aristocracy.

This is the competition between officers—I'm not even talking about the social divisions between enlisted soldiers and officers.

Do people who have been in the army feel the same as you?

A lot of people I know are army officers and are more conservative. They're not so democratically inclined. They don't have mainly moral opposition to the war.

But the times are a-changing. People like them are now looking at what the establishment's doing and thinking, "Hang on. This is going a bit far."

It's said that 558 British soldiers have died of Gulf War syndrome since 1991. It's a postponed body bag.

If 558 body bags had come home from the Gulf in 1991 people would be thinking about things a bit differently now.

But the delay and isolation of the deaths partly disguise the cost of that war to British families.

If people want to support our troops they should bring them home. If people want to be patriotic, then that's the patriotic line.

My parents voted for Thatcher every time. They've never been on a demonstration in their life.

They're both going to the anti-war demonstration in London on Saturday 15 February.

We're reaching through into some pretty conservative territory. There's something funny happening. The two main political parties in parliament are identical.

Who represents the 80 percent of people who are opposed to war?

The 15 February demonstration is more like a pro-democracy march than an anti-war one. These are very dark times, but there is hope.

James Thorne

is now an active member of the Stop the War Coalition at Manchester University.

JAMES THORNE

in my view

This blue city is turning red

THERE WAS a small revolution in St Albans last week, one that should give Tony Blair pause for thought as he shackles Britain to the chariot wheels of US imperialism.

A meeting called by the Stop the War Coalition turned out to be the biggest protest meeting the city has seen in living memory.

Around 350 people packed a school hall. There weren't sufficient chairs, and latecomers had to sit on stairs and at the back of the platform.

If the hall had rafters, people would have been hanging from them. Eighty people had to be turned away. The meeting was so big it was in danger of breaking the safety regulations.

Thunderous applause greeted speeches by George Galloway MP, Lindsey German of the national Stop the War Coalition, Dean of St Albans Christopher Lewis, Rebecca Gumbrell of the Quakers, and Raza Khan of the Islamic Rights Commission.

The support for the meeting was even more remarkable when you consider that the original meeting place, the city's theatre, was cancelled when the theatre's owners decided they couldn't stage a "political" event.

It was the Dean of St Albans who helped find a new meeting place in a girls' school, and frantic activity took place to publicise the change of venue.

St Albans is in Hertfordshire, just 20 miles from central London. It's best known for its cathedral and Roman remains.

Boudicca set fire to the Roman city where St Albans now stands, the local people enthusiastically supported the dissolution of the monasteries in Tudor times, and they backed parliament against the crown during the English Civil War.

Small earthquake

Nothing much has happened in St Albans for a century or two.

Since the 1950s it has returned one reactionary Tory MP after another. Its industry has disappeared. The house I live in was one of a block built by Marconi after the Second World War for its workers, but Marconi closed several years ago.

St Albans should not be dismissed as simply a middle class city.

There are council estates, a large working class population, a thriving Italian community—descendants of refugees from Mussolini's fascism in the 1930s—and now an influential Muslim community as well.

With large numbers of people commuting to London to work in white collar jobs, St Albans has not been a hotbed of political activity.

Then in 1997 it elected a Labour MP for the first time in almost half a century. Streets normally festooned in blue have switched to posters for Labour.

Whatever you think of New Labour, electing a Labour MP amounted to a small earthquake in a place like St Albans.

The radicalisation has now gone further.

The support for the anti-war meeting last week was stunning.

I've lived in St Albans for 25 years and I sat transfixed in the gallery of the school hall at the size of the turnout, the quality of the debate from platform and floor, and the £1,300 that was raised following a financial appeal.

The local Labour Party boycotted the meeting. The chairman said he did not attend meetings "organised by the SWP", a remark that is factually incorrect and insulting to the 350 who turned up to voice their anger over Blair's supine support for the Texan oil barons.

I hope Blair gets to hear about the meeting. He may win the war but he's in serious danger of losing the peace.

by ROGER PROTZ

music

ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION

Scaling walls of Fortress Europe

FOR MORE than a decade Asian Dub Foundation (ADF) have been making brilliant music that attacks injustice and celebrates resistance.

PANDIT G from ADF talked to YURI PRASAD about their new album, *Enemy of the Enemy*.

ADF have been out of the spotlight for the last few years—what have you been doing?

We've been all over the world and what we've seen influenced us enormously.

We've played in the former Yugoslavia to 28,000 Bosnians and Serbs.

We went to Brazil and took an idea for a track called "19 Rebellions" with us. We worked with young

Brazilian musicians to create the track as it appears on the album.

The title comes from a series of prison rebellions that took place in Brazil a few years ago. That even prisoners can fight for their human rights inspired us to write about it.

Do you think that music can help people who are fighting back?

Absolutely—it's another tool we can use. While it can't substitute for struggle itself, it certainly can get publicity, or even just create a debate.

Our new single, "Fortress Europe", is an attempt to create a debate. I walk down the street—I see billboards for the *Evening Standard* that link terrorism, raids and asylum seekers and all the

stuff pushed by the *Daily Hate-Mail*.

What's so terrible about people coming to this country to make themselves a bit better off? Isn't that what has happened throughout history?

The mixing of different cultures has been one of the benefits of immigration. Is that a message that ADF promote?

Yes, that's what gets lost in the argument today. The real history of Britain is a history of immigration. Many people in Britain are descended from Anglo-Saxons. Who were the Saxons? They were economic migrants from northern Europe.

The history of music is a history of change and in-

novation that cuts across borders.

Adrian Sherwood produced our new album. Thirty years ago he fused the sound of punk with dub reggae and early hip-hop acts and created something new. That's what we want to create now—music with that punk spirit, with distortion sound effects all mixed up with tabla drums, dub and rap.

The media have devoted themselves to linking violence and drugs to various forms of urban music. Do you think that there is a connection?

It's ridiculous. How can So Solid Crew be the reason why two young girls from Birmingham get killed at a party? Artists reflect the society that's around them—they don't create it.

But it's also a question of marketing. Record companies think that the more controversial you are the better. We had exactly the same debate with hip-hop acts in the 1980s.

Look at what has happened with Eminem. He used to be attacked for being misogynistic and homophobic, as well as talking about drugs and guns.

Now they give him awards. He's been rehabilitated—it's the American Dream repackaged.

What people forget is that rap started as a means of talking about your community. It's no accident that rappers like Gil Scott Heron and the Last Poets came at the same time as the Black Panthers.

The media are scared of talking about the real causes of drug use and crime. If you've got no opportunities and you can't afford to live, you are surrounded by drugs. It's easier for the media to talk about the symptoms rather than the cause.

People say that ADF is a political band while most mainstream music is apolitical. Do you think the mainstream will get more radical?

Music mirrors our society, so it is going to have a political content. Even *Pop Idol* is political. But so many people are talking politics at the moment, whether it's about the war, immigration or the firefighters.

New music is coming through. It's in fanzines, it's on the internet, and it's unstoppable.

book

Graphic tales of Gaza resistance

BETWEEN 1987 and 1992 Palestinian youth undertook a heroic uprising—the first intifada—against their Israeli oppressors.

Towards the end of this period the journalist and artist Joe Sacco took himself to the West Bank and Gaza to try to understand what was happening.

In Nablus a Palestinian man attempted to explain the level of suffering that he and his friends had endured.

Each person he introduced Sacco to had been arrested, or shot or imprisoned, or had had close relatives murdered by the occupying Israeli forces.

"You write something about us? I showed you—you saw. You tell about us?" he begs.

This book is Joe Sacco's attempt to tell the story of Palestine and its people.

Throughout it Sacco expresses doubts about his project, partly because he chooses to tell the story in the form

by SASHA SIMIC

of a graphic novel—a comic. On that count he needn't have worried.

Palestine is a brilliant and honest work.

The graphic form that Sacco uses is a perfect medium to transmit the kaleidoscope of experiences he comes across in Palestine.

Unbelievable

It's not a pretty story because the plight of the Palestinians is not pretty.

But Sacco doesn't just see them as victims—he also tells a story of almost unbelievable endurance and resistance.

■ *Palestine* by Joe Sacco is available from the Bookmarks bookshop—phone 020 7637 1848 or go to www.bookmarks.com

PEACE NOT WAR

A DOUBLE CD OF MUSIC DONATED BY ANTI-WAR ARTISTS INCLUDING: PUBLIC ENEMY, ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION, BILLY BRAGG, NITIN SAWHNEY, MS DYNAMITE, MASSIVE

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IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE

Big ideas in informal settings

Marxist forums

ALTRINCHAM
What is fascism and how can it be stopped?
Wed 5 Feb, 4.30pm,
Altrincham Library.
With Ameen Hadi.

BARNSELEY
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Library, Shambles St.

BIRMINGHAM HANDSWORTH
After the World Social Forum: is there an alternative to capitalism?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Summerfield Community Centre.
With Chris Harman.

BIRMINGHAM KINGSHEATH
After the World Social Forum: is there an alternative to capitalism?
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Dance Workshop,
Moseley Rd.
With Chris Harman.

BIRMINGHAM SPARKHILL
What's the solution in the Middle East? Eyewitness report from Palestine
Thu 6 Feb, 7pm,
Shahenshah Restaurant,
Ladypool Rd.
With Caroline Johnson.

BLACKWOOD
Racism, rap, guns and violence
Mon 10 Feb, 7.15pm,
Blackwood Miners Institute.
With Martin Chapman.

BOLTON
How do we fight fascism?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Green Room,
Bolton Library.

BRADFORD
What are the roots of Zionism?
Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm,
Bradford Library, Princes St.

BRISTOL MONTEPELIER
Can the trade unions challenge capitalism?
Wed 5 Feb, 7pm,
Bristolian Cafe, Picton St.

BURNLEY
What lies behind the US drive to war?
Tue 11 Feb, 7.30pm,
Shalamar, Church St.

CAMBRIDGE
Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
CB2, Norfolk St.

CHESTERFIELD
Can the trade unions challenge capitalism?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Assembly Rooms, Market Sq.
With Dick Pitt.

COLCHESTER
Why is war central to capitalism?
Mon 10 Feb, 8pm,
RAD Hall, Southway.

DONCASTER
Does the media control our ideas?
Wed 12 Feb, 7pm,
The Point, South Parade.

DUDLEY
Public services in crisis: is privatisation the answer?
Thu 30 Jan, 8pm,
Claughton Community Centre,
Blowers Green.

ECCLES
Palestine: how can it be free?
Wed 5 Feb, 7pm,
Eccles Library. *With Geoff Brown.*

GATESHEAD
Is there a global working class?
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Gateshead Library,
Prince Consort Rd.

HALIFAX
Is war central to capitalism?
Wed 5 Feb, 8pm,
Methodist Church Hall
(opp Co-Op), Hebden Bridge.

HARLOW
Who was Rosa Luxemburg?
Wed 12 Feb, 8pm,
Polly's Pantry, Wych Elm.
With Belinda Affat.

LEEDS HEADINGLEY
Are women equal today?
Sun 2 Feb, 6pm,
Deli-Katessen Cafe, Hyde Park Cnr.

LEICESTER
Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?
Mon 17 Feb, 7.30pm,
Cafe Mozart, London Rd.
With Chris Nineham.



VIETNAMESE RESISTANCE (above) and mass protests in the US and elsewhere defeated the US in South East Asia in the 1970s. Marxist forums in many areas will be discussing the history—and the lessons for the anti-war movement today

LINCOLN
Che Guevara: more than a revolutionary icon?
Tue 4 Feb, 6pm, Nourish Cafe,
1 Newland.

With Dave Hayes.
LIVERPOOL AIGBURTH
Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Collect Gallery,
Lark Lane.

LIVERPOOL CITY CENTRE
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Tue 4 Feb, 7.15pm,
Casa, Hope St.

LUTON
Malcolm X and the struggle for black liberation
Mon 3 Feb, 7pm,
CoMotion Coffee Bar
(next to Thistle Hotel).

MANCHESTER WITHINGTON
Palestine: how can it be free?
Thu 6 Feb, 6.30pm,
Withington Library,
Wilmslow Rd.

NEWCASTLE HEATON
The bloody history of the British Empire
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Chillingham, Chillingham Rd.

NEWCASTLE WEST END
Is the state neutral?
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Linwood Centre
(off West Rd).

NEWPORT
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Tue 4 Feb, 7.30pm,
USR Room,
Newport Centre.

NORTHAMPTON
Islam, resistance and revolution
Thu 30 Jan, 7pm,
Cafe Msaada,
Kettering Rd
(nr Picturedome).

NOTTINGHAM HYSON GREEN
Is racism getting worse?
Thu 13 Feb, 7pm,
Forestfield Community Centre,
Sturton St.

NOTTINGHAM SHERWOOD
Drugs, guns and pop culture
Tue 11 Feb, 7.30pm,
Katmandu,
Mansfield Rd.

OLDHAM
Can war lead to revolution?
Thu 30 Jan, 7pm,
West Indian Community Centre,
Horsedge St.
With Martin Smith.

OXFORD
Advertising the body: why sexism sells
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Mitre, High St.

PRESTON
Vietnam: when US imperialism was humbled
Tue 11 Feb, 7.30pm,
Unity Community Centre,
Shepherd St (off Church St).

READING
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Mon 10 Feb, 7.30pm,
Reading International Solidarity
Centre, London St.

With Julie Waterson.
SCUNTHORPE
Can the trade unions challenge capitalism?
Mon 3 Feb, 7pm,
Central Community Centre,
Lindum St (opp bus station).

With Dave Hayes.
SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE
Globalisation and the working class
Thu 6 Feb, 6pm,
Coffee Revolution,
Church St.

With Angela Shann.
SHEFFIELD HEELEY
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm, Hartley
Street Community Centre.

With Dave Hayes.

SHEFFIELD NETHER EDGE
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Sat 1 Feb, 7.30pm,
TC's internet cafe,
Abbeyle Rd.

With Phil Turner.
SHEFFIELD PARK HILL
Empire: the bloody history of British imperialism
Thu 30 Jan, 6pm,
Bard Street Community Centre.

SHEFFIELD SHARROW
Advertising the body: why sexism sells
Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm,
Highfields Library, London Rd.

SOUTHAMPTON
The state: should we bypass it or do we have to confront it?
Thu 6 Feb, 8pm,
Cook House, St Mary's St.

ST ALBANS
What kind of revolutionary was Malcolm X?
Mon 3 Feb, 7.30pm,
upstairs, Trinity Church
(cnr Beaconsfield Rd/Victoria St).

SUTTON COLDFIELD
Vietnam: when a superpower was humbled
Sat 8 Feb, 3pm,
Three Tuns Hotel, Hollyfield Rd.

WIGAN
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm,
Wigan Pier.

YORK
Do Western workers benefit from Third World oppression?
Wed 19 Feb, 8pm,
Priory Street Centre.

FORUMS IN LONDON
ACTON
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
West London Trade Union Club,
Acton High St. *With Andy Brown.*

BARKING
Does the media control our minds?
Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm,
Barking Library (rear doors).
With Paul McGarr.

BRENT
Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm, Willesden
Library , Willesden High St.

With Pete Morgan.
BRICK LANE
Is rap responsible for rising violence?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Coffee@Brick Lane
(nr Old Truman Brewery).

BRIXTON
Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?
Mon 3 Feb, 7pm,
Dogstar, Coldharbour Lane.

EAST HAM
Why is war central to capitalism?
Wed 5 Feb, 6.30pm,
Indo-Ceylon Cafe, St John's Rd
(off High St North).

ENFIELD
Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Edmonton Green Leisure Centre,
Plevna Rd.

With Pete Jackson.

EUSTON
Is rap responsible for the rise in gun crime?
Tue 11 Feb, 6.30pm,
Cafe Deco, Store St (off Gower St).

HOMERTON
Drugs, guns and racism: what's the solution?
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Barnabas Centre,
Homerton High St.

ILFORD
Is rap responsible for a rise in gun crime?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Kohi-Noor, 50-52 Ilford Lane.

LONDON FIELDS
Can the US Empire be stopped?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Queensbridge Sport and
Community Centre, Holly St.
With Charlie Kimber.

LADBROKE GROVE
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Tue 4 Feb, 7.30pm,
Green Room, Paddington Arts
Centre, Woodfield Rd.

With Ian Birchall.
MILE END
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Mon 10 Feb, 7pm,
Orange Rooms Cafe, Burdett Rd.

MUSWELL HILL
Is Labour still a working class party?
Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm,
Sasa Thai restaurant.

SHOREDITCH
Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Thu 30 Jan, 8pm,
Barley Mow
(cnr Curtain Rd/Rivington St).

STAMFORD HILL
Why is war central to capitalism?
Thu 30 Jan, 7.30pm, Cyprus
House Cafe, 8 Manor Parade
(cnr Stamford Hill).

STREATHAM
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Wed 12 Feb, 7.30pm,
Boogalu's, Sunnynhill Rd.

TOOTING
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Derinton Road Community Centre.

TUFNELL PARK
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Wed 5 Feb, 7.30pm,
Rustique Literary Cafe,
Fortress Road.

With Pat Stack.
VICTORIA
Malcolm X and the fight for black liberation
Thu 30 Jan, 6.30pm,
City Harvest Cafe,
Buckingham Palace Rd.

WALTHAMSTOW
Sport and business: can the two be separated?
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Quaker Meeting House,
Jewel Rd (off Hoe St).

With Jo Cardwell.
WEST NORWOOD
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Thu 6 Feb, 7.30pm,
Bar 196, 196 Norwood Rd
(nr Tulse Hill ➡).

With Paul Holborow.

Plymouth
07803 620 390
Portsmouth
07801 290 411
Scotland (SW Platform)
07855 023 739
Sheffield
07905 678 506
South East London
07951 737 003
South London
07939 017 973
Southampton
07811 210 036
Swansea
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West London
07958 996 777
York
07984 132 371



INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

Fill in this form and send it to
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Join the socialists

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☎ 020 7053 2071
Stop the War Coalition
www.stopwar.org.uk
☎ 020 7053 2155/6
Socialist Alliance
www.socialistalliance.net
☎ 020 7791 3138
Defend Council Housing
www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk
☎ 020 7987 9989
Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers
www.defend-asylum.org
☎ 07941 566 183
Spark
☎ 07905 998 675
Scottish Socialist Party
☎ 0141 221 7714

Local SWP

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Birmingham
07949 028 362
Black Country
07941 834 125
Bradford
07811 403 299
Brighton
07808 368 551
Bristol
07711 718 519
Cambridge
07950 142 464
Camden & Islington
07961 337 640
Cardiff
07815 775 819
Central London
07957 316 094
Chesterfield
07881 558 590
Coventry
07712 047 873

East Anglia
07946 269 024
East London
07753 697 743
Exeter
07939 558 115
Hackney
07788 770 741
Home Counties
07905 589 865
Kent
07950 610 257
Lancashire East
07968 952 180
Lancashire West
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Special report from the World Social Forum in Brazil

AGAINST A WORLD OF WAR AND POVERTY

TWO THINGS formed the background to last weekend's World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

One was the threat of a devastating war against Iraq within weeks.

The other was the swing to the left in Latin America, expressed in the victory of left wing candidates in presidential elections in Brazil and Ecuador, and in the failure of the coup attempt against Hugo Chavez's government in Venezuela.

Both themes were present in the big demonstration of 140,000 that marked the opening of the forum, and many of the discussions over the next four days.

A 40,000-strong rally greeted new Brazilian president, Lula, when he visited Porto Alegre on Friday, and rapturous applause greeted Chavez on Sunday.

People understood that Lula had won the election because he seemed to promise hope to the mass of people.

They also understood that Venezuela's rich had tried to overthrow Chavez with a lockout, disguised as a strike, because he had promised a few reforms for workers, peasants and the poor.

Along with the applause for Lula, however, went some

CHRIS HARMAN
and **CHRIS NINEHAM**
report from
Porto Alegre

questioning of his policies. He is immensely popular as the first person from a working class party to win an election in Latin America since the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile in 1973.

But decisions he has made are worrying many of his admirers. He has accepted a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made by his neo-liberal predecessor Cardoso. He has appointed a former executive of a US bank as his economics minister. He has said he is willing to negotiate over the formation of an American free trade zone with the US.

Worries

Many people think this means continuing US economic domination of Latin America.

Such worries were intensified when Lula went from the World Social Forum to attend a meeting of the organisation it was set up to oppose—the World Economic Forum of industrialists, bankers and government ministers in the Swiss skiing resort of Davos.

Lula sought to calm people's doubts by saying he was going to argue for measures to deal with poverty.

But some wondered how you could have a bridge between the rich and the corporations and those who suffer under their rule.

A few people were even saying that Chavez was better than Lula, tending to ignore

the compromises Chavez has repeatedly made with those who will try to overthrow him again if they can.

The most important thing, however, was what the enthusiasm expressed—a new confidence that the mass of people of the continent can fight back after two miserable decades of defeat and demoralisation.

The culmination of the forum came when 18,000 people crowded into the Gigantinho Stadium to listen to Noam Chomsky and Arundhati Roy speak about "resistance to empire".

Chomsky talked about how those who liked to think of themselves as "the masters of the universe" were damaging people's lives:

"We have been talking about life after capitalism.

"It would be better to say life, because there is not going to be any unless we do something about capitalism."

He exposed the hypocrisy of Bush and Blair and called on people to oppose their war against Iraq.

Arundhati Roy roused the whole stadium to applause as she denounced the way the world's rulers were destroying people's lives, their cultures and their environment in the search for profits.

She said, "Resistance to empire—or, to call it by its proper name, imperialism—is growing."

The whole audience rose to their feet as she ended, "We are many. They are few. They need us much more than we need them."

Everyone felt all the issues debated over the previous four days had been brought together, and they left the stadium inspired to fight against the horrors George Bush has in store for us.



Picture: MARINA RIVERO

ANGER AGAINST war was very visible on the opening march

A tale of two different camps

THERE WAS often a contrast at the World Social Forum.

There was vibrant enthusiasm in some of the big meetings, on the demonstrations, in the grounds of the university where most of the meetings took place and, above all, in the 20,000-strong youth camp.

You felt that people from every continent and every part of Latin America were all strengthened by the mere recognition

that so many had gathered together.

But that feeling was missing from many, possibly most, of the meetings.

The bigger meetings tended to be dominated by platform speakers, usually middle aged, middle class, white and male, who read their speeches at length, leaving little time for participation from the floor.

Alongside these there were literally hundreds of small workshops, with any-

where between 15 and 100 people present. There was little effort at coordination of these to ensure fruitful sharing of different experiences.

The result was that the formal side of the event felt less challenging to those who run the world system than did the European Social Forum at Florence in November.

Despite this, most people will have gone home aware that the global move-

ment is growing, and even more committed to fighting capitalism's evils—debt, hunger, ecological destruction, economic crisis, commodification of people's lives and, above all in the next few weeks, the threat of war.

Four years ago it would have been unimaginable that so many activists from so many countries could get together like this. Today it is a reality which is not going to go away.



LULA DA SILVA

The dynamic heart of a growing movement

THE YOUTH camp was several miles from the main site of the forum. Around 20,000 people were cramped into a dusty park, sleeping in small tents they had brought with them.

On the first day it poured with rain, and they had had to scratch out shallow trenches in order to avoid getting flooded out.

They were mainly Latin Americans—Brazilians, Uruguayans, Argentinians—with little money to spend in the city restaurants or

even on bus fares to the main forum site.

One 15-strong group had travelled by bus the 1,500-mile, 36-hour journey from Santiago in Chile.

Another teenage couple were anti-army activists from Paraguay, a country run as a dictatorship by generals for decades and still threatened with military repression.

Everywhere in the camp there was the feeling of young people challenging society, anarchists on one side

of the camp, socialists, Communists and Trotskyists on the other, with red flags above each grouping of tents, and in between ecologists, pacifists, or anti-racist activists.

You would see them sitting in groups, with campfires in the background, engaged in earnest discussions.

It was like an open-air rock festival—except it was the most dynamic part of a new world movement challenging an old world system.

Worldwide action

ANTI-WAR activists at Porto Alegre launched a global coalition.

More than 1,000 people from more than 60 countries came to a day-long assembly to discuss organising a network.

Everyone who spoke agreed that the campaign against war on Iraq was of crucial importance.

Activists from the US, Brazil, Palestine, India, Portugal and almost every other corner of the world committed themselves to organising anti-war activity on 15 February.

Speakers from the US all agreed that their movement was already bigger than the anti Vietnam War campaign in the late 1960s. One said, "This is the most important and powerful social movement in the US for decades—and it is growing in strength daily."

Hundreds of Latin American delegates applauded speakers who said a global campaign against war on Iraq was crucial to weakening imperialism in their continent.

There was tremendous excitement in the hall. We all recognised we were building something unprecedented, something with huge potential.

One delegate summed up the feeling when she said a successful global movement against the war would be a blow to the dictatorship of the IMF and the World Bank.

Hundreds of delegates from scores of organisations signed up to an international e-mail list, and a group of video activists started organising a global video link for the demonstrations on 15 February.

Slogans about global resistance were becoming real in front of our eyes.

GLOBALISE THIS!

GLOBALISE Resistance will be touring colleges in the week running up to the anti-war demonstration on 15 February.

The "Globalise This!" tour features three fantastic overseas speakers.

● Daniel Correa is on the national coordinating committee of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), the landless labourers' union which has led an inspirational and successful campaign in Brazil.

● Antonino Campenni from the rank and file union Cobas in Italy was recently arrested and held on charges of subversion after the European Social Forum in Italy.

● Soheir Morsy is an anti-war activist in Egypt, and was part of the campaign

that launched the Cairo Declaration now gathering support across the globe.

The speakers will be joined at various venues by, among others, Tariq Ali and Yvonne Ridley.

Look out for the tour coming to a college near you.

GUY TAYLOR

■ Monday 10 February, Liverpool University and Manchester. Tuesday 11 February, York University and Sheffield. Wednesday 12 February, Goldsmiths College and London School of Economics. Thursday 13 February, Swansea and Bristol. Friday 14 February, London.

For more information go to www.resist.org.uk or phone 020 7053 2071.

In brief

March to defend education

THREE MORE schools in Hackney, east London, have voted in an indicative ballot to take strike action in solidarity with sacked union rep Indro Sen.

Teachers at Kingsland School took one day's strike action in support of Sen two weeks ago.

Now the campaign has been given a boost.

The fight to defend Indro Sen is part of a bigger fight to defend comprehensive education in Hackney.

The Learning Trust, which runs education in the borough, has announced plans to close Kingsland School and a primary school, Laburnum.

The Learning Trust is supporting the introduction of new privatised "city academies".

Hackney NUT has called a demonstration this Saturday to defend comprehensive education in Hackney.

Demonstrate, Saturday 1 February. Assemble 12 noon, Kingsland School, Shacklewell Lane.

'Provisional wing of the CBI'

SHOPPERS APPLAUDED as over 1,000 supporters of the 87 sacked TGWU union workers at the Friction Dynamics plant in Caernarfon, North Wales, marched through their town last Saturday.

They heard a number of TGWU speakers praise the workers' determination to carry on the fight for justice against union-busting boss Craig Smith.

Smith lost an industrial tribunal case last November, but he has lodged an appeal.

TGWU branch secretary told *Socialist Worker* that picketing will continue by the 37 remaining strikers until Smith pays up.

To much applause at the rally, TGWU leader Bill Morris condemned the government as being the "provisional wing of the CBI" bosses' organisation.

JOHN UNSWORTH

Rallying cry for refugees

"DAVID BLUNKETT, shame on you! Asylum seekers have rights too!"

So went the angry chant that greeted the home secretary when he addressed a Charter 88 meeting on citizenship in Sheffield last week.

The Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers had called the lobby of Blunkett to protest at New Labour's appalling racist treatment of asylum seekers.

Some people who had simply turned up to hear Blunkett speak also joined the lobby. And inside the meeting, many people questioned Blunkett on the war on Iraq.

ANGELA SHANN

Solidarity with Kensington 87

PROTESTERS gathered outside the South African high commission in London last week as 87 people went on trial on Johannesburg.

The case of the Kensington 87 has been dragging on for nearly a year.

They were arrested at a protest outside the house of the Mayor of Johannesburg over privatisation and high charges. The accused include well known activist Trevor Ngwane.

The verdict will be handed down on 5 March.

Rail workers

EWS workers: 'Our action must bite'

TRAIN DRIVERS working for freight company English Welsh & Scottish Railway (EWS) plan to strike this Saturday and three subsequent Saturdays.

We have become increasingly angry at management's refusal to hold proper talks about pay, the implementation of a 35-hour week, and pensions.

At present EWS drivers are on the lowest rates for any rail company.

In ballots, 75 percent of EWS drivers and 84 percent of EWS International drivers (who go through the Channel Tunnel) voted for action.

We are sick of waiting for a decent deal. We need to make the action bite and force the company to pay up.

If striking one day a week does not produce quick results then we should be looking to escalate very quickly. Otherwise we can have a long battle where people can get to think we are not breaking through.

EWS DRIVER

□ **CONDUCTORS** at Arriva Trains Northern marked the anniversary of their battle for decent pay last week.

Peugeot

AN OVERALL majority of 53 percent of Peugeot car workers have voted in favour of strike action.

They have rejected a management pay offer worth 7.3 percent over two years.

Members of both the majority TGWU and Amicus unions recorded almost identical majorities.

Leaders of the unions have planned a series of one-day strikes to back up the claim.

However, the negotiating committee have delayed their meeting to fix the dates for the action and give notice to the company. They are not due to meet until 31 January. Many workers believe

Colombia solidarity

"IF YOU keep fucking around we are going to kill you all." That threat was made by the Colombian army to workers at the EMCALI public utilities firm this week.

The workers, based in the city of Cali in the South American country, are occupying offices and plants against the threat of privatisation. A year ago they beat off privatisation

that this is playing into Peugeot's hands.

One TGWU worker said, "Before Christmas they could not make enough cars for Europe.

"Now they have given notice of planned lay-off days over the next two months. They are using the delay to soften us up."

Meanwhile workers in the smaller parts plant have launched a 100 percent successful mass overtime ban to apply pressure.

The company have complained that it has cost them £1.4 million for every weekend of lost production.

GERRY JONES

after an occupation.

Now the new extreme right wing Colombian government is mounting a new offensive.

Emergency picket of Colombian Embassy, Wednesday 29 January, 4.30pm-6.30pm, 3A Hans Crescent, London (Knightsbridge e)
Send protests to: auribe@presidencia.gov.co

Socialist Alliance

THE SOCIALIST Alliance received 4.5 percent of the vote in the local council by-election which took place in Tottenham Hale in Haringey, north London, last week.

Labour won the election with 691 votes. Labour's vote fell by over 25 percent since the local elections last May and their majority was cut from nearly 700 to just 257.

The Tories came second, nearly doubling their vote from the May elections.

The Socialist Alliance candidate, firefighter Steve Cracknell, got 68 votes, 4.5

percent of the total and 9.8 percent of Labour's vote.

Steve told *Socialist Worker*, "I'm slightly disappointed by our vote.

"It certainly doesn't reflect the feeling I've encountered in support of the firefighters and against the war.

"But it was important to campaign and raise our arguments.

"And we are going to continue the campaign against the war and for decent pay for the firefighters."

□ **OVER** 30 women attended the Socialist Alliance day



ARRIVA WORKERS have been fighting for a year

The workers have been fighting for one year, and have had over 20 separate strikes, against a hard-nosed management that has refused to pay them a decent rise.

Management's latest offer is for just 4 percent with a

£250 lump sum.

The workers' RMT union has suspended all strikes and is about to conduct a ballot of all its Arriva Trains Northern members on whether to accept the offer.

Local union reps are recommending a no vote on the

Journalists

Bradford kicks off battle

JOURNALISTS in Bradford are set to lead the action again in this year's low pay battles.

Members of the journalists' NUJ union at Bradford Newsquest led the way last year with the first pay strike for a decade.

They have now voted by 87 percent for a series of two-day stoppages, starting this week on 30 and 31 January.

The journalists plan to strike again on 10-11 February and 19-20 February.

"Everyone is up for it," said a chapel (workplace union branch) rep.

The journalists are demanding a pay rise of £2,000 per year each.

The company have offered an insulting 2 percent, which is less than inflation.

"Newsquest Bradford makes £23,000 per day. By 9 January it had made enough this year to pay the claim in full," said a chapel rep.

The Bradford journalists' strike just over a year ago sparked a wave of successful industrial action to beat back low pay in the industry.

school held in Manchester last weekend.

In the morning session we heard from women from Palestine, Western Sahara and Tanzania about the effects of globalisation on women around the world.

In workshops we discussed the Socialist Alliance childcare campaign and how to make it an integral part of our local election campaigning.

We also discussed how to enhance the representation of women within the Socialist Alliance and also in the wider movement.

CAROLE HAINES

offer.

One worker told *Socialist Worker*, "This offer is just pig-headedness on management's behalf.

"We need to reject this and rebuild our resolve to show the company that we won't be treated like this."

Picket lines will be mounted outside the company's offices in Bradford, Shipley, Otley, Keighley, Skipton and Ilkley.

NUJ members at the *Westmorland Gazette* in Kendal are set to fix strike days after voting 97 percent for strikes and 100 percent for action short of a strike in their pay battle.

YORKSHIRE NUJ MEMBERS

■E-mail Newsquest UK chief executive Paul Davidson by going to www.newsquest.co.uk/your_comments.html or faxing 020 8646 3997.

■Send messages of support to bradfordnuj@yahoo.co.uk. Send cheques and postal orders to Newsquest Bradford NUJ chapel, at NUJ, 22 Swan Street, Manchester, M4 5JQ. ■Ask for a speaker for your union meeting—e-mail the above address.

Diary
Upcoming events

Saturday 1 February

●Anti-war march and rally, Swansea. Assemble 12 noon, Patti Pavilion, Victoria Park. Called by Swansea Coalition Against War.

Saturday 8 February

●Anti Nazi League national conference, Manchester. Phone 020 7924 0333 for details.

Saturday 15 February

●National demonstration against the war, 12 noon, Embankment and Gower Street, London. For more

Health workers

AN IMPORTANT meeting for all health workers is set to take place in Birmingham this weekend.

Every worker in the health service should try to come, whether you're a porter or a nurse, a cleaner or a receptionist, work in a hospital or in the community, are in Unison, GMB, Amicus or any other health union.

The rank and file newspaper *Health Worker* has called the meeting to debate and discuss the government's new pay package for NHS workers, Agenda for Change.

This is the government's attempt to drive through "modernisation" in the NHS, its codeword for cuts and harder work.

To cap it all, the whole package is tied to a three-year pay deal of just 3.2 percent a year—an insult to the people who keep the health service going.

Agenda for Change will do nothing for some of the lowest paid health workers, those who work for private companies which rip off the health service.

Where I work some of the porters earn under £4 an hour and do not get sick pay

Liverpool

WORKERS AT two Merseyside hospitals have voted at mass meetings to accept an improved deal from management.

Members of the TGWU, Unison and GMB unions struck for one day at the end of last year at Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge hospitals on the Wirral over bad working conditions and poverty pay.

The deal means that low paid catering workers, porters and

and full benefits.

Agenda for Change also does nothing to redress staff shortages and the huge pressures on frontline staff.

Saturday's meeting is the first chance that many rank and file health workers will have to thrash out all the issues around Agenda for Change.

It is also a unique opportunity for rank and file activists from all the health unions to get together.

The government wants to push Agenda for Change through quickly, with pilot schemes this year and full implementation in spring 2004.

There is not much time for us. We need to organise a strategy to oppose it.

LOUISE RATHBONE, nurse, Heartlands Hospital, Birmingham

HEALTH WORKER
CONFERENCE

**Saturday 1 Feb
1-4pm**

**United Services
Club, Gough Street,
Birmingham**

Hackney council

AROUND 70 people attended a lively Beating Racism forum in Hackney, east London, last week.

The meeting was called by Hackney Trades Council and supported by local union branches.

The Hackney Unison branch will be voting this week on strike action in solidarity with three Unison officers who have been suspended by the council.

Meanwhile the Saturday strikes of library workers in Hackney, received a boost last week.

At the picket line outside the Technology Learning Centre, five newly recruited Saturday workers joined the Unison union and immediately joined the picket line.

Management is furious and is sticking to its hard line of imposing new contracts on existing workers to break the strike.

The library workers have been striking on Saturdays for over a year in protest at the withdrawal of payments for working on that day.

But library workers are determined to picket out new workers.

Join the pickets this Saturday from 8am at the Technology and Learning Centre, Shoreditch library and Stoke Newington library.

RUSTY EBRAHIM

■Send messages of support to Unison, 2 Hillman Street, London E8 1DY. E-mail hackney.unison@unisonfree.net

Saturday 1 March

●Globalise Resistance and trade unions conference. For more details go to www.resist.org.uk or phone 020 7053 2071.

Saturday 15 March

●Socialist Alliance annual general meeting, London. For more details go to www.socialistalliance.net or phone 020 7791 2138.

Saturday 26 April

●Stop privatisation—the case for council housing. Defend Council Housing national conference, 11am-4.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Liverpool. For more details go to www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

4-11 July

●Marxism 2003. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party.

details phone 020 7053

2135 or go to www.stopwar.org.uk

●Demonstration against the war, Glasgow. Assemble 10am, People's Palace, Glasgow Green. Organised by Scottish Coalition for Justice not War.

●Love Music Hate Racism—gig with Cobra, Stolen Steps and other bands, 9pm, Manor Quay, St Peter's Campus, Sunderland. All profits to Anti Nazi League and Northern England Refugee Service.

28 February-2 March

●Revolution 2003—a teach-in to build resistance to war and capitalism hosted by Socialist Worker Student Society and Spark. Phone 020 7515 2646 or go to www.swp.org.uk/swss for details.

SOLIDARITY IS CRUCIAL NOW

Stakes even higher in the fire strikes

FIREFIGHTERS and staff in control rooms cheered this week when news came through that their FBU union executive had refused to bow to New Labour's bullying and was going ahead with planned strikes.

Rank and file feeling out-weighted heavy pressure on the executive members to end all the action and get trapped in talks that were going nowhere fast.

Graham Tranquade, the

FBU chair of Region 10 (East Anglia) told *Socialist Worker*, "I have absolutely no doubt that it was the correct decision to proceed with the strikes this week.

"We have no choice but to take the fight to the government because what we get from ministers is hot air and harsh words.

"They have not been moved by what we have done so far.

"The FBU membership is up for the strikes and the public support is still there.

"On the picket lines last time there was just as much

backing from people who went past as ever.

"Firefighters know there is no future in the recommendations that came out of the Bain report.

"It means a totally inadequate pay deal, job cuts and an assault upon the service.

"I hope workers everywhere will continue to support us."

The government stepped up its bluster and threats after the last strike.

It let it be known that it was preparing legal action against the union and its leader Andy Gilchirst under

the updated version of the "master and servants" act.

This makes strikes illegal if they involve workers "maliciously" putting lives at risk.

Incredibly in some parts of the country there were suggestions that firefighters had fallen foul of the law by NOT picketing and therefore not being available in case of a major fire.

Islington FBU rep Paul Emburey told *Socialist Worker*, "Thank goodness this week's strikes went ahead.

"Before this we suspended 28 days of strikes.

"Instead of coming closer towards our claim, the government brought forward progressively worse offers.

"Their agenda includes 4,500 job losses, closures and tearing up shift patterns.

"It is absolutely clear that more hard-hitting strike action is needed.

"We need to look again at the strategy the union has been following."

"There should be no more strikes called off until there is a genuinely improved offer from the employers and the government."

The government is escalating in order to try to crush the firefighters.

Disgracefully, John Prescott said on Monday that the pay offer is going to get worse every time the firefighters strike.

He raised doubts that the employers could now fund the derisory 11.3 percent offer

Profit from station closures

MANY TOWN and city centre fire stations will close under the next phase of the government's plans for the service.

It is part of a lethal package of job cuts, fewer fire stations and punishing shift patterns.

Deputy prime minister John Prescott has asked all 58 fire authorities to draw up "risk assessment" reports within the next six months. These would be used to trigger closures.

The *Times* reported, "Redundant fire stations in expensive locations could represent particularly lucrative opportunities for land-hungry developers.

"One of the plum sites

for residential conversion would be the station on King's Road, Chelsea. It would have a value of £100 million."

John Hunter, the managing director of development firm Northacre, says, "There is plenty of scope for a grand acquisition of a portfolio of fire stations.

"At Chelsea, with retail on the ground floor and residential above, it is a perfect site for a plaza-style scheme. It's on our radar screen."

Prescott wants to sweep away the law which requires fire authorities to get government permission before they close stations.

The FBU is preparing a legal challenge. Union offi-

cials point out that changing this law needs consultation. Prescott says that submission to the Bain review was sufficient "consultation".

DEMONSTRATE

Support the firefighters

SATURDAY 1 FEB, 12 NOON

Blythswood Square, Glasgow

Called by the FBU, supported by the Scottish TUC



TYNESIDE PICKETS know who is to blame

over two years even if it was linked to "modernisation".

Prescott went on to tell a Commons select committee that the firefighters' strikes would mean less money for "the deprived and vulnerable in our communities".

This government is about to waste billions on war and it refuses to tax the rich. Yet it tries to blame ordinary working people who demand their rights for the problems in society.

Firefighters can win. The fact the government has not dared to use the law against the strikes shows their nervousness about the mood in Britain.

But as the government steps up the attacks, firefighters also need to escalate. A smattering of strikes is not

going to be enough.

FBU leaders need to up the action and demand full solidarity from the rest of the trade union movement.

EVERY DAY of the pay campaign has increased FBU members' anger against the government.

It would be quite wrong, as some of the union leadership are suggesting, to postpone the union's conference this year.

There needs to be the chance for every member to have an input into discussing the fight for pay and to defend the service.

There also needs to be debate about how the union uses its political fund and about its relationship with New Labour.



Make sure you get copies of Red Watch, the voice of rank and file firefighters and control staff.
It can be ordered from 07973 521 594 or 07939 021 094.

GOING TO COLLEGE MEANS MASSIVE DEBTS

More barriers to working class children

VIRGINIE is at Parswood Technical College in Manchester.

"I want to study medicine so the idea of top-up fees really worries me.

After three years you could have £20,000 of debt, but I might be at college for four, five or six years. I could be in debt for the rest of my life.

I knew it would be hard just to live for three years at university—now it is worse, because it's not just living expenses but fees as well.

Next year I am taking a year out to earn some money.

I heard that essential medical books cost around £30 each. You can spend £400 in your first term just on books.

I already have two jobs as a school security guard and a waitress.

I am under pressure to save everything I earn and put it towards going to university."

THAD POPE is at a further education college in Brighton.

"I am furious with the government.

Tuition fees affect art students really badly because we don't know if we will get a job when we graduate or not.

JUDY COX spoke to A-level students about how the government's new policies on university fees and grants (see page 16) will affect them

My mum is a single parent—she works 38 hours a week, including 12-hour nightshifts, and earns around £12,000, but I won't get a grant.

I have loads of friends who have given up on the idea of going to university—they are just hoping to get a break.

University should help you become the sort of person you want to be.

I have been considering not going myself because of the size of debts I would get.

Discrimination against working class people should have been wiped out of education years ago. The fact that it is getting worse in 2003—that's frightening."

KATHERINE CONNELLY is at a sixth form centre in Cambridge.

"We organised a debate between local Labour MP Anne Campbell and Socialist Alliance candidate Howard

Senter on Labour's higher education policies.

It was the biggest meeting we have ever organised.

Anne Campbell said so many more students want to go to university that new ways of funding have to be found.

There were 60-odd students there, but only three supported what she said.

Lots of people brought up the issue of the war and missile defence. They asked if there is money for that, why not for education?

When Anne Campbell talked about the terrorist threat, there was laughter and heckling.

One student said, "It feels like our rights have been taken away from us and sold back to us for a fee."

If the National Union of Students calls some action like a student strike, we should back it all the way."

JAVAAD ALIPOOR is at a sixth form college in Bradford.

"Everyone should be free to study to whatever level they want to.

The government is keeping people down, depriving them of education.

Of course, it doesn't mean you are stupid if you don't go to university—some of the most intelligent people I know never went.

But if you don't, you have fewer chances.

The government is trying to reinforce the old class divisions in society.

My family is not poor, but they will be if they have to pay for me to go to university. And I have a little sister who will want to go too."

HENNA MALIK is at a sixth form college in New Malvern.

"The new policy is ridiculous. They say they want more working class students but this will make it more elitist.

Some universities will charge more fees, people will be put off going to them and it will reinforce the idea that they are only for the rich.

People already think university is only for middle class people, and that will be worse if it costs more to go.

I want to go to the LSE in London, and it is worse in London because it costs so much to live there."

SEAN IRVING is at the Holy Cross School in Bury. He has got a place to study history at Cambridge University.

"The government is reintroducing a two-tier education system.

Abolishing the grants made it hard to survive at university.

Fees are another disincentive for poorer people to go to university.

It is ironic that Tony Blair says he supports equality of opportunity when this will stop people having opportunities.

And people will be put off doing courses that don't lead to well paid jobs. There is already a shortage of nurses and teachers.

We should have a more progressive tax system to pay for education where people pay more if they earn more, whether they have been to university or not."

Socialist Worker

Clarke's top-up fees will mean a life of debt

'Ten seconds from carnage'

Tube bosses risk lives for profit

NEW LABOUR'S privatisation scheme for London Underground came within a hair's breadth of killing dozens of people last Saturday.

A motor fell off a Central Line tube train, knocking it off the rails as it entered Chancery Lane station.

The train smashed into the platform, and its doors were ripped off as some carriages slammed into tunnel walls.

No one was killed, though dozens were injured. It could have been a catastrophe.

London Underground management are gambling with passengers' lives. The priority on the tube is to prepare it for privatisation.

And George Bain, who wants cuts in the fire service, is a director of Bombardier, one of the private firms lined up to profit from that privatisation.

Bombardier now owns ABB. This is the firm which a decade ago supplied the trains now used on the Central Line.

Now Bombardier, part of the Metronet consortium, is set to take over Central Line maintenance.

Tube workers spoke to *Socialist Worker* about what really happened on Saturday.

They dare not be identified, such is the climate of fear and management bullying on the tube.

They told us that:

●Had the motor fallen off ten seconds earlier the train would have been in a tunnel and going faster, instead of slowing down for a station. People would have died.

●Chancery Lane station is almost deserted on a Saturday. Had the incident occurred on a busy weekday, or even at the next station, Holborn, on a Saturday, people on crowded platforms would have been killed.

●The train had been reported making strange noises at Leytonstone, eight stations

'London Underground relies on passengers using the alarm if they spot smoke'

earlier, and at intervening stations. Yet management ordered it to continue.

●London Underground says it intended to stop the train and evacuate people at Holborn station, one stop after Chancery Lane. Tube workers simply don't believe that.

They say it makes no sense to halt a train at Holborn. Stopping it earlier at Liverpool Street, where there are proper sidings, was the most obvious place.

●London Underground management also say drivers can stop a train if they believe there is a safety problem. Drivers we spoke to reacted furiously to that.

They agree with RMT rail union leader Bob Crow who this week said, "London Underground are running a regime of fear in which drivers are routinely bullied and threatened with disciplinary action if they refuse to move trains on safety grounds."

●When tube drivers did stop trains during the firefighters' strikes because of safety con-



PASSENGERS CRAMMED on London Underground's Central Line before last week's crash

cerns, management insisted the workers should carry on. Had Saturday's crash happened on a strike day, the army would not have been able to cope.

●There is a longstanding problem with the motors coming loose or even falling off trains used on the tube's Central Line, and on the Waterloo & City Line.

Before Christmas the unions asked for all trains run-

ning on the Central Line to be checked.

Tube workers told us that management claim they did this in a weekend, and without putting all the 85 trains into depots where there are proper facilities to work under the trains. Tube workers don't believe this work was properly done.

●Even management accepts that faulty axle bearings on Piccadilly Line trains could

overheat and result in derailments.

London Underground relies on passengers raising the alarm if they spot smoke. ●Behind all this lies privatisation. The Central Line has been running as a "shadow PPP", as if it were already privatised.

Tube workers say this means performance targets based on "business needs". A train pulled out of service

means the "firm" operating the trains loses thousands of pounds.

Tube workers' union leaders, Aslef's Mick Rix and the RMT's Bob Crow, called for a halt to PPP on London Underground.

They are right. If it is not stopped New Labour will be responsible for the carnage that will, at some point, be the inevitable result of putting profit before safety.

A WAVE of outrage has greeted the government's white paper outlining plans to make students pay more for university education.

Universities will be allowed to charge students top-up fees in three years time.

The fees will be limited to £3,000 a year, but only until the election after next.

Some universities have already declared they would like to hike the charges up to around £15,000 a year.

This means ordinary people will be priced out of education.

The government axed student grants in 1998, saddling students with huge debt.

Now it says it will bring grants back, but only for those whose family income is less than £10,000 a year. The grants will be worth a pitiful £1,000 a year.

Fees will not have to be paid up front. But they will have to be repaid as loans, along with living expenses built up over years at college.

The repayments start at 9 percent when graduates earn just £15,000.

New Labour claims that graduates earn on average £400,000 more than non-graduates in their lifetime, so student debt is a small price to pay.

A new study by the London School of Economics has exposed these figures.

Reports suggest they are taken from the 1960s, when only a tiny elite went to university.

Today some graduates, for instance those with arts degrees, actually earn 4 percent LESS than people who have A-levels.

Top-up fees will deepen the class divisions that already exist in higher education.

The new regulator that is supposed to ensure working class kids get into universities will have no powers to enforce fair representation.

Education secretary Charles Clarke says the government wants 50 percent of young people to experience higher education by 2006.

But he doesn't want them doing popular courses at prestigious colleges or learning to develop all their abilities.

He wants them doing new "work-focused" two-year foundation degrees at further education colleges.

"One of the key features of these courses is that employers play a role in designing them," according to Clarke's white paper.

It is already a scandal that so few ordinary people get to go to university. Clarke has just shattered the hopes of thousands more.

■ **Turn to page 15 for students speaking out.**

Picture: JESS HURD/www.reportdigital.co.uk

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